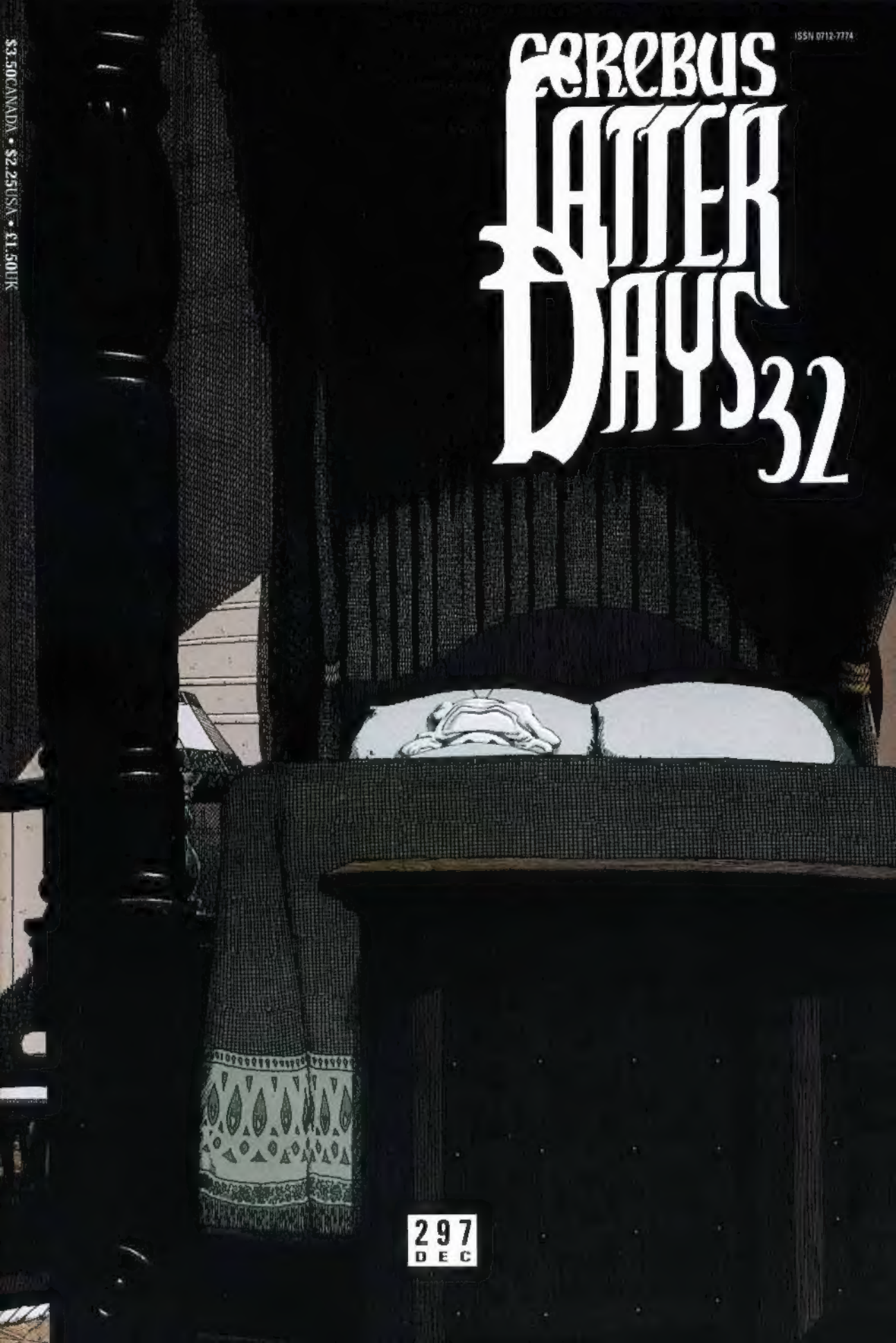
ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS

LATTER DAYS 32



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297
DEC

Endings V

27 October. Even as the pressure is building, there are glimmerings of good news. The photographer from *Saturday Night* magazine was here 16 September (I guess the female senior editor was outvoted—the article on *Cerebus* is supposed to be in the November issue). As we were headed outside to get our pictures "took," Ger mentioned that he had just dropped off enough plastic bags, backing boards and envelopes at Pak-Mail for the freebie list and subs through issue 300. Suddenly, we were both grinning like Cheshire Cats. As I was likewise grinning, standing at the fax machine and faxing the solicitation for *Cerebus* 299. "Only one more of these to go."

Of course, back in the real world, I'm trying to be as wary of that as I can be on an every-minute-of-every-day basis. That may have been the *solicitation* for 299, but the fact is, 295 is still the most recent issue to ship and every week is a new adventure in what can go wrong.

The latest problem is "getting in our own way" with the *Latter Days* trade paperback which—at 512 pages—is a massive undertaking and, not surprisingly, happens to be what Preney is most focused on even as we're trying to get issue 296 through there simultaneously. I had considered just deciding that we wouldn't do the last two trade paperbacks until after *Cerebus* was finished, but that would've just shifted the pressure from publishing to public relations: subjecting the retailers to months of their *Cerebus* customers (many—if not most—of whom only buy the trade paperbacks and don't follow the monthly title) asking when the next trade is coming out. I had picked up a day by doing thumbnail layouts for the all-background first half of 298 and then lost that day when it ended up taking me about twelve hours to read the entire book in blue-line form and fax through my corrections to Preney. The next stage is signing the first signatures of the book for the signed and numbered first printing and after that it's up to the bindery (which is not only out of our control, but out of Preney's control). The book was solicited for October, but the best we can hope for is sometime in November. God willing, in time for Christmas shipping or everyone will be up in arms.

Meanwhile, Gerhard (who lives in the same world most of you inhabit) dropped a day over Canadian Thanksgiving. So we both lost a day. Now we just have to wait and see if that was a fluke or—if it happens again—how often it's going to happen in the last fifty pages. Unfortunately, the only way of finding out is by doing the pages, one at a time.

In terms of the Big Picture, I've started working on the last three installments of "Aardvark Comment," pulling out the letters that I intend to answer. Answering letters is not as fast a process as the "Getting *Riel*" dialogue (and thanks to Chet for finishing off his part of part three even though he was on the road promoting *Riel*): there are way more "speed bumps" that involve front-end and back-end proof-reading and making sure everything fits. I ended up several pages short on the "Aardvark Comment" in 294 and had to fax several emergency letters and answers, mid-issue, to Nilda at Preney (hi, Nilda!) something I hope to avoid on the last three by *under*-estimating rather than *over*-estimating how much space the letters and answers will fill.

And I have "hooked up" with the end of the story—I've started finishing the pages from 300, 299 and 298 that I had roughed in backwards the last time I was writing in this space. So, technically, yes, everything does fit and it's just a matter of making each page look as good as I can get it and hope that I don't drop any more days in the process.

The best news for me, personally, is that Ramadan started on Sunday, so I have a much larger concern than *Cerebus* to occupy my primary attentions for the next four weeks and to keep "writing and drawing a comic book" where it belongs in my life: a distant second place.

CEREBUS

NO. 297 DECEMBER 2003

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer
Characters
(interior art & cover)
pencil & ink,
mechanical tones,
lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist
Cover Artist
pencil & ink
Cover Technician

LATTER DAYS

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266
and 267)

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to
288)

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to
300)

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY
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DAVE SIM AND GERHARD

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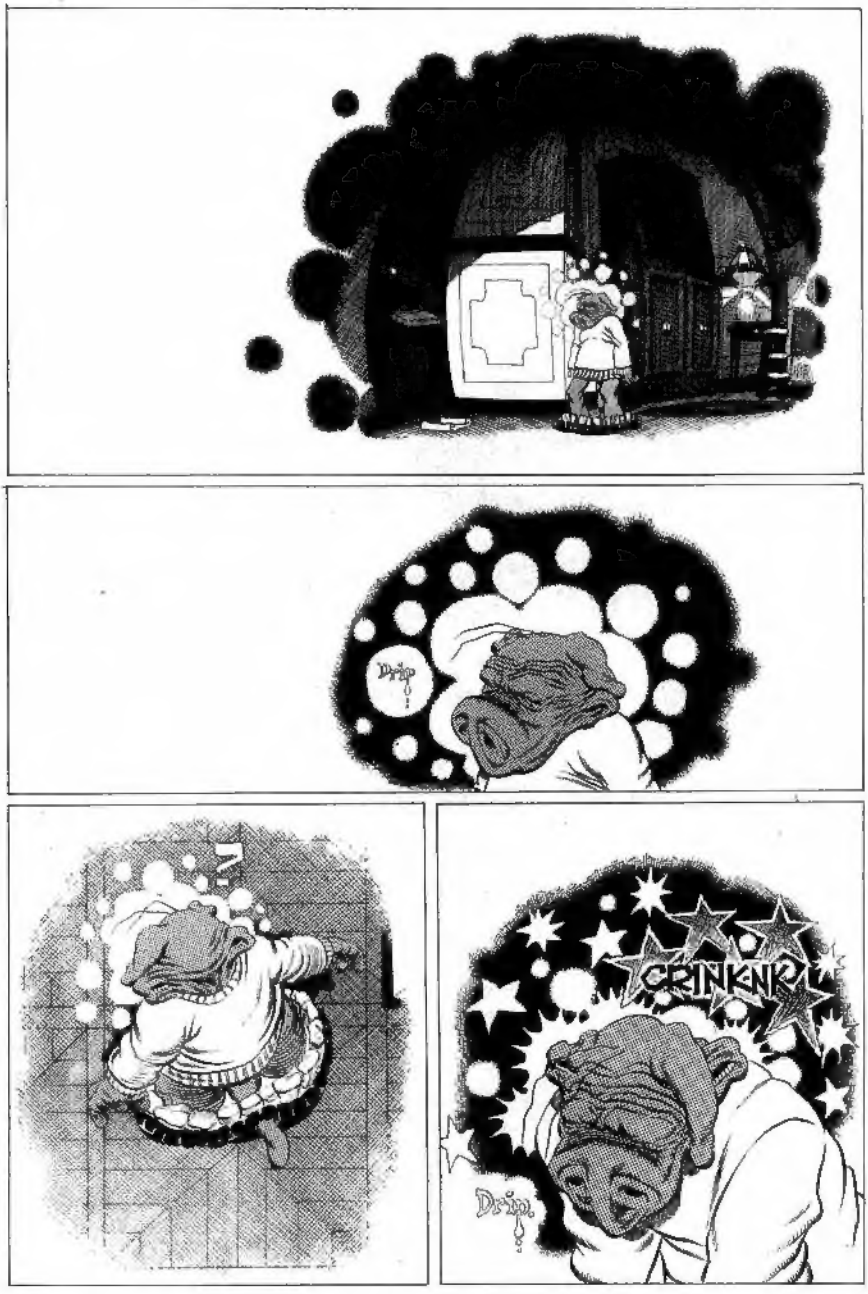
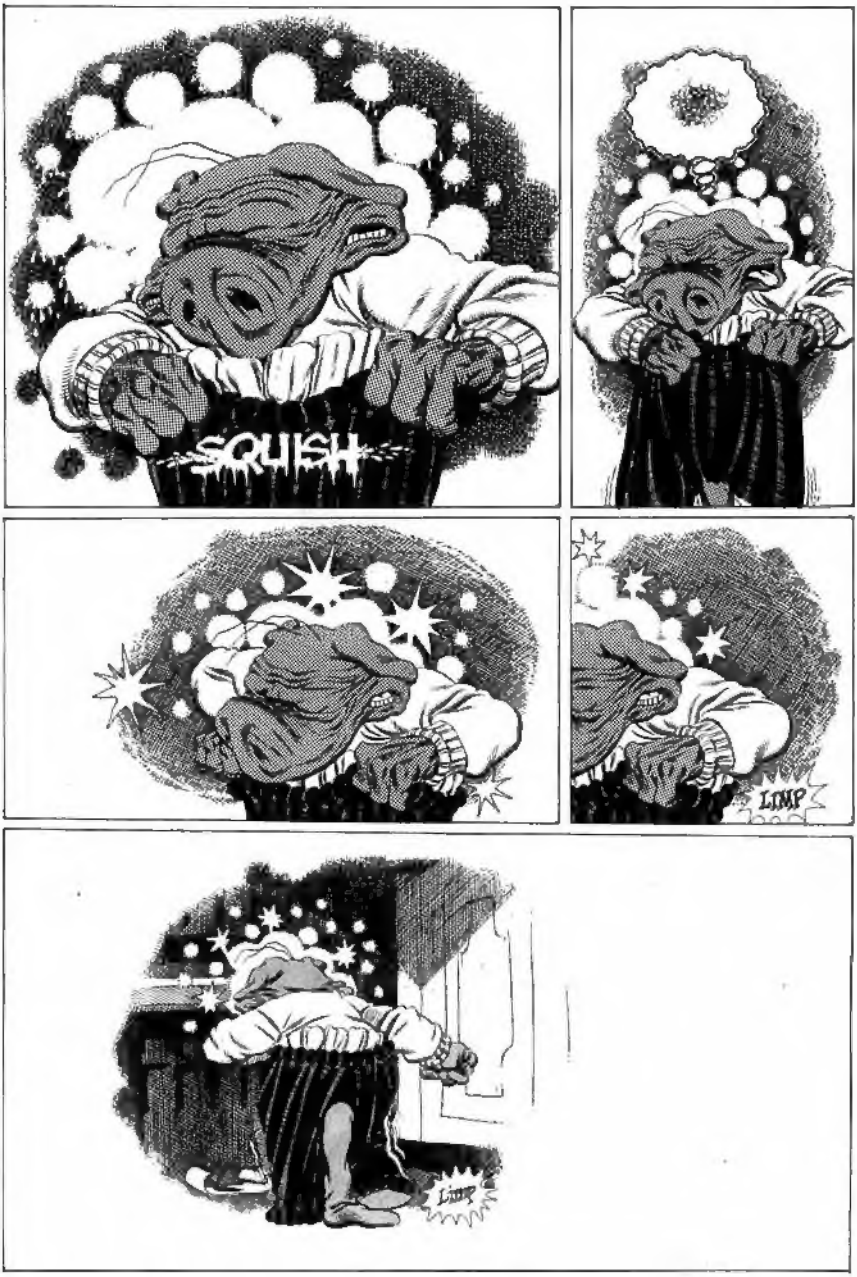
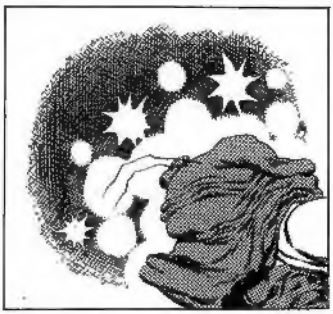
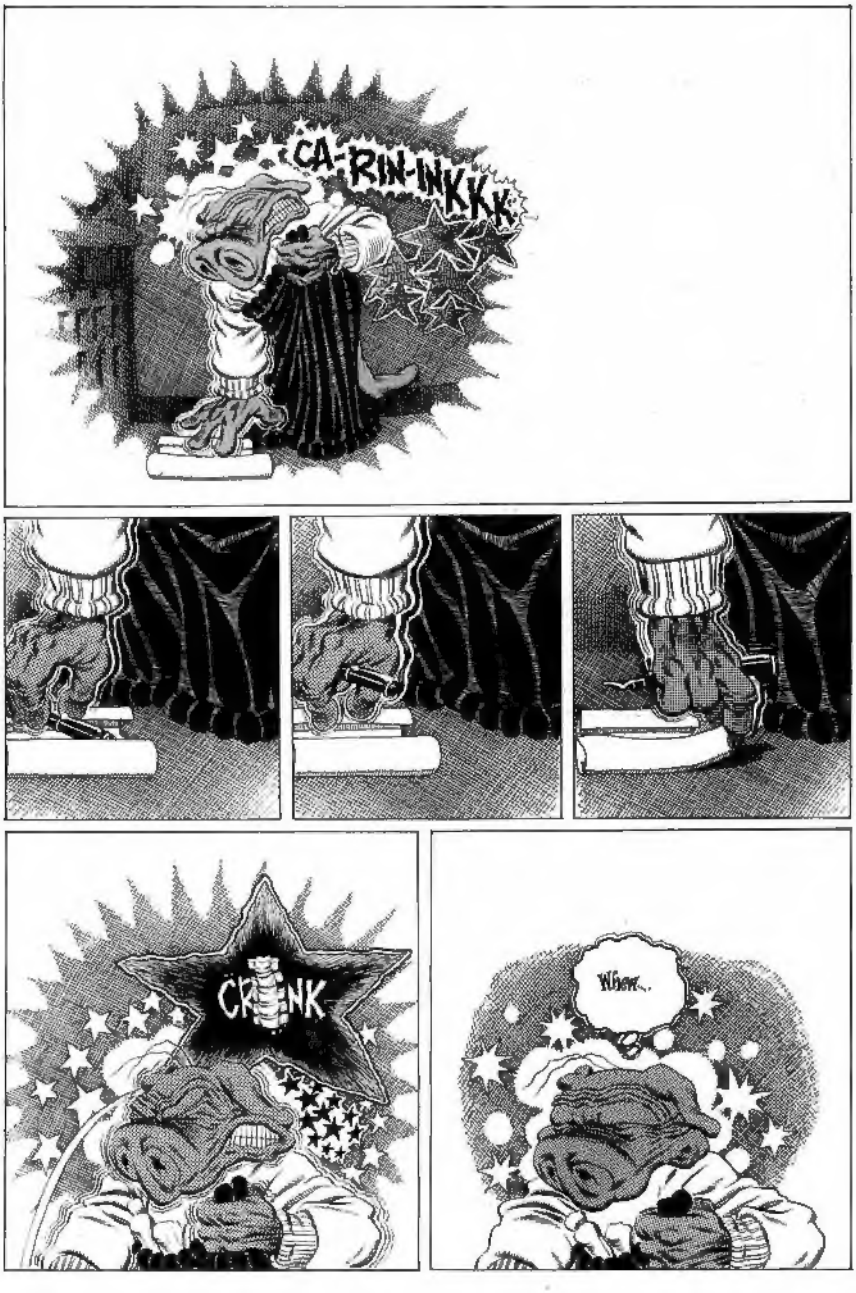

Drip
CRINKNK
Drip.

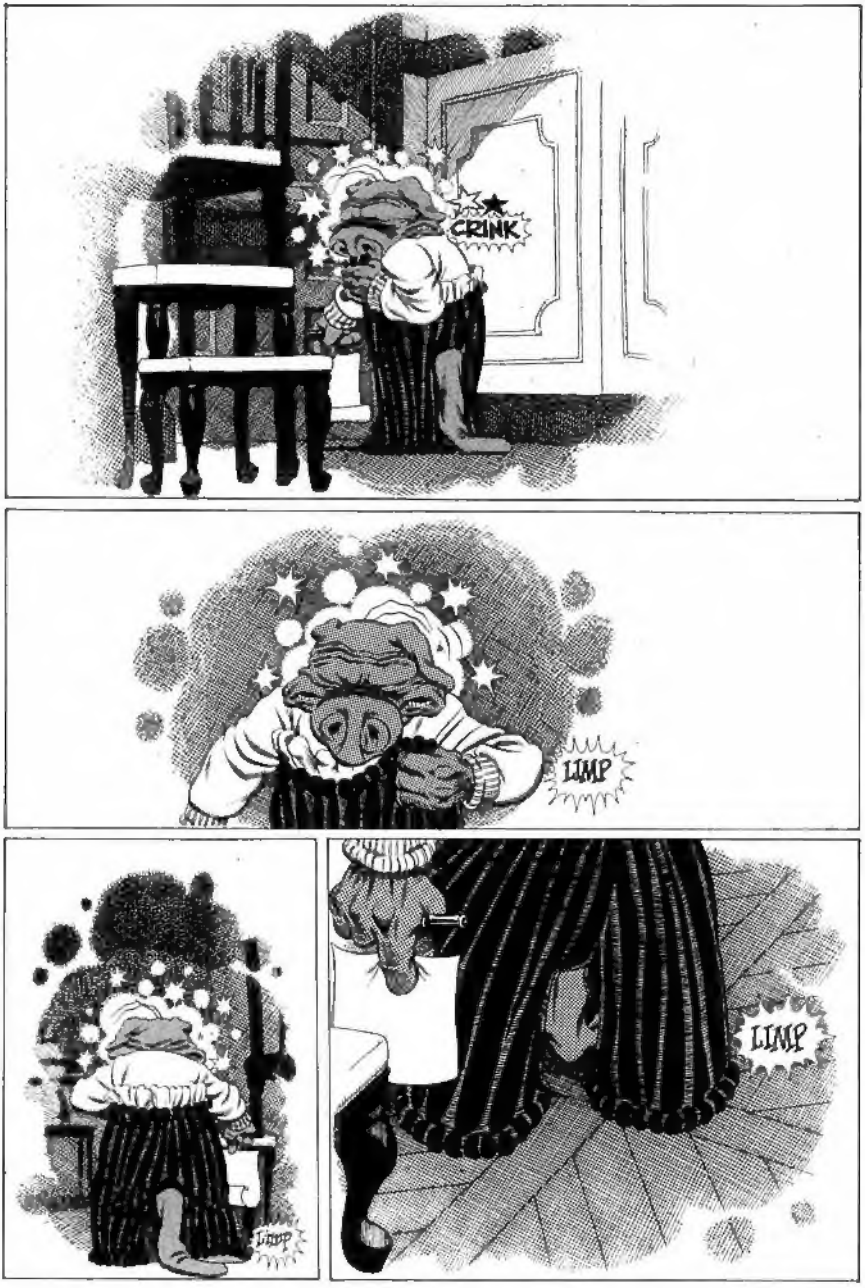

SQUISH
LIMP
LIMP

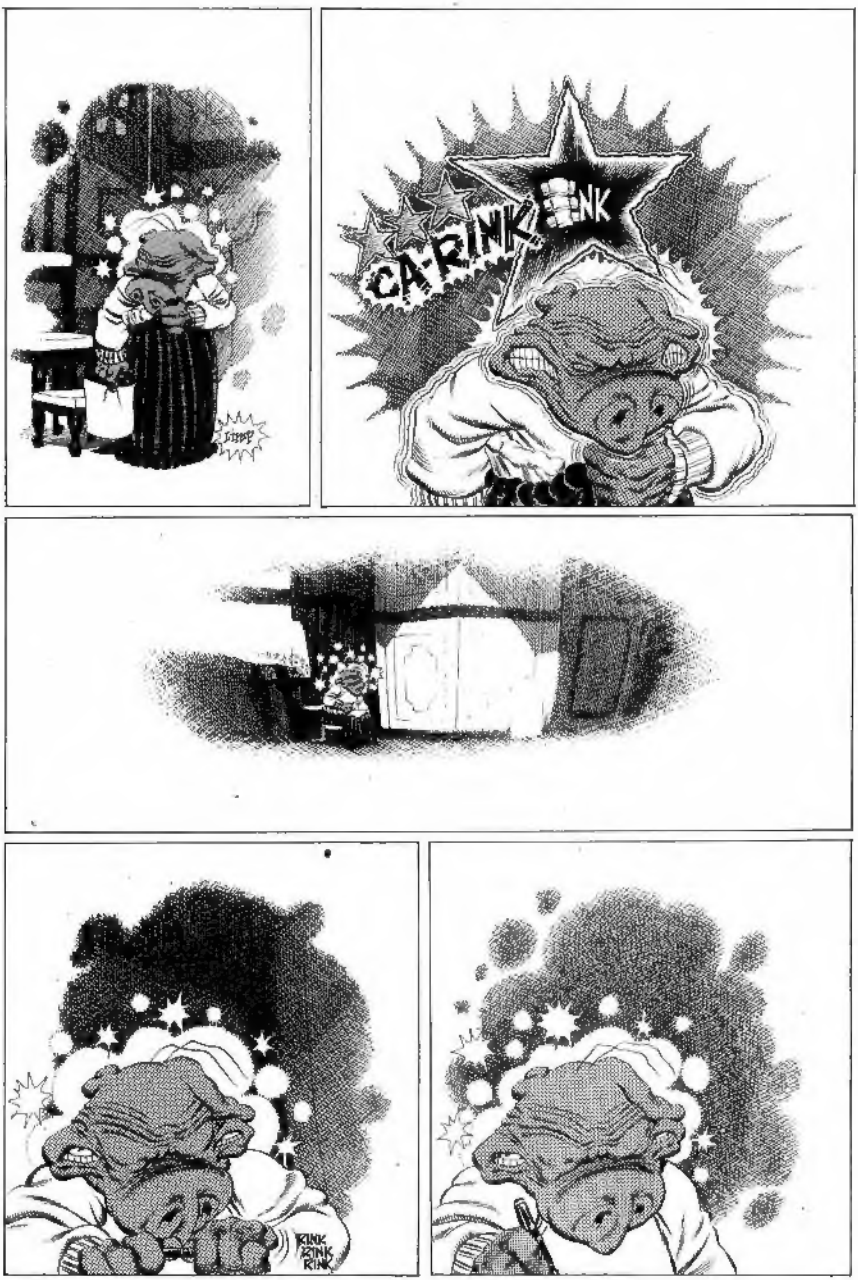
LIMP

Limp




CA-RIN-INKKK
CRINK
Whew...


CRINK
LIMP
LIMP
LIMP


CA-RINK
NK
KINK
RINK
RINK

IF YOU'D LIKE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT, SIR, I CAN COME BACK LATER.
WHAT?
I SAID: "IF YOU'D LIKE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT, SIR...
CRINK
NAY.
CRINK

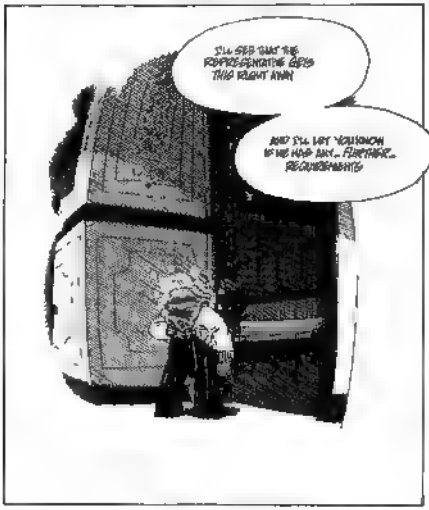
sk
skch
skch skch skch
ARE YOU SAGE, SIRE
CA-RING
I THOUGHT THIS WAS...
I THOUGHT SOME OF THE...
LUMP
WORDING
LUMP
PARTICULARLY THE...THE...
LUMP
THE WORDS "CAPITOL" AND...
Lump

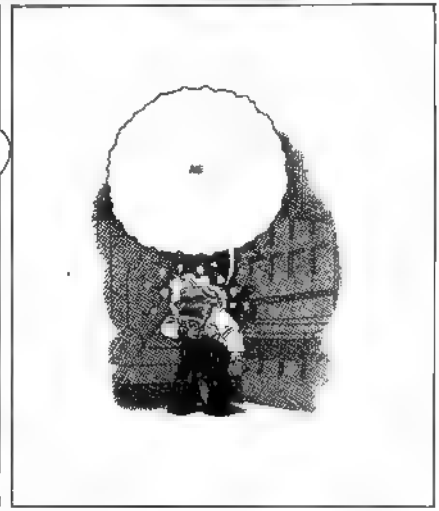
"...HUUUHHUHH..."
SHIK

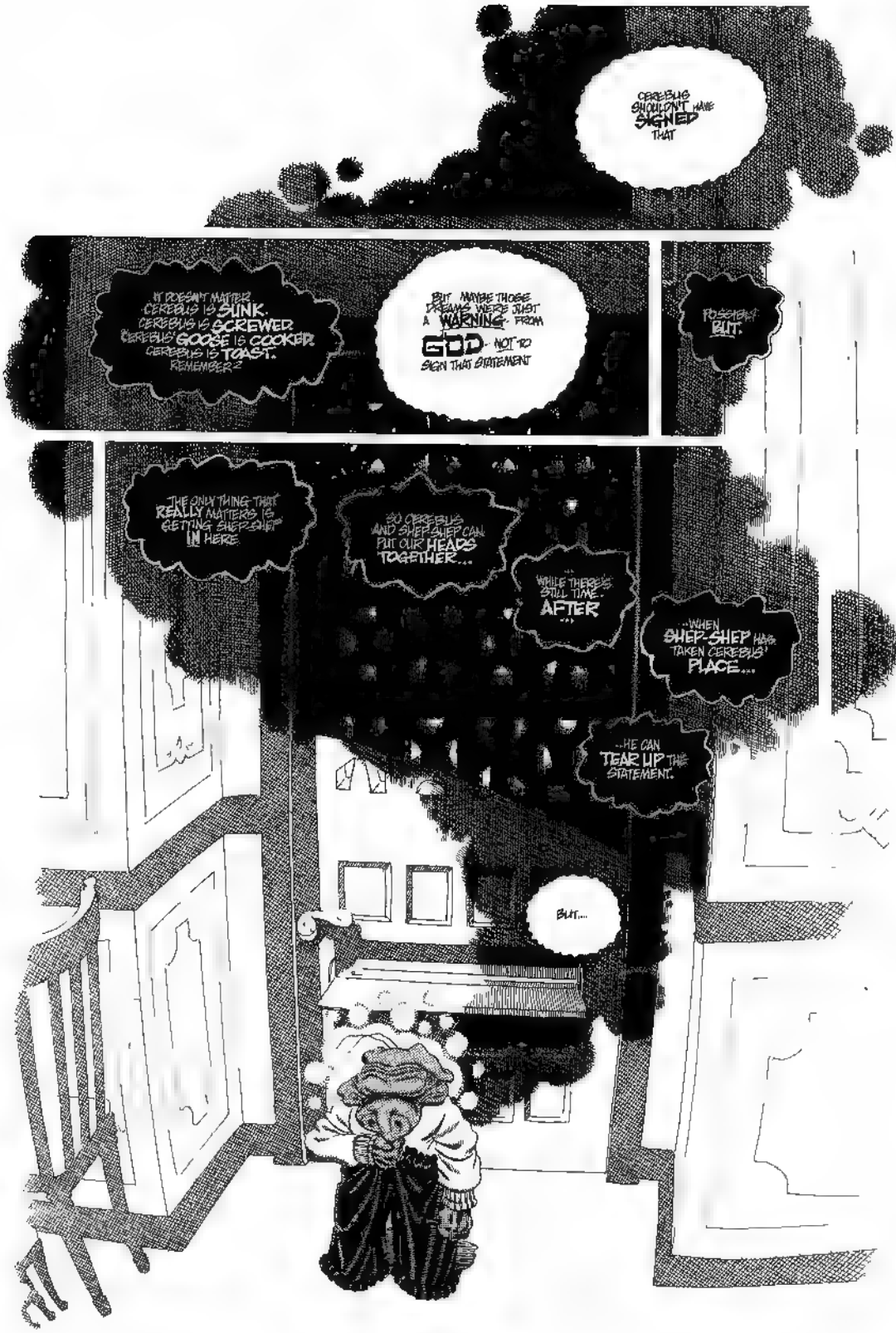
SHIK
SHIK

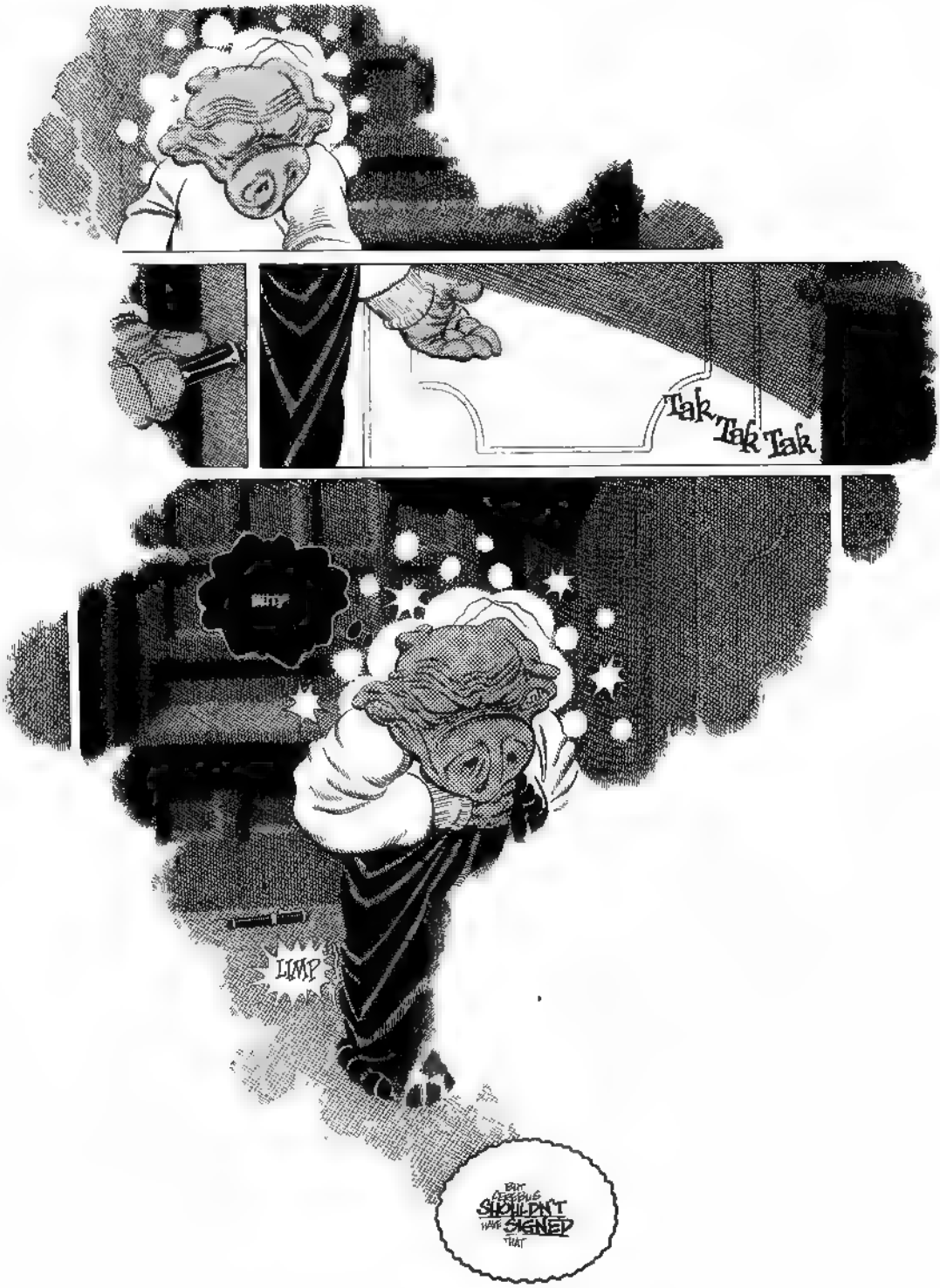
NAH.

AH. YOU KNOW, SIR, I'LL SEE THAT THE "FOOD" IS
HIKE
HIKE

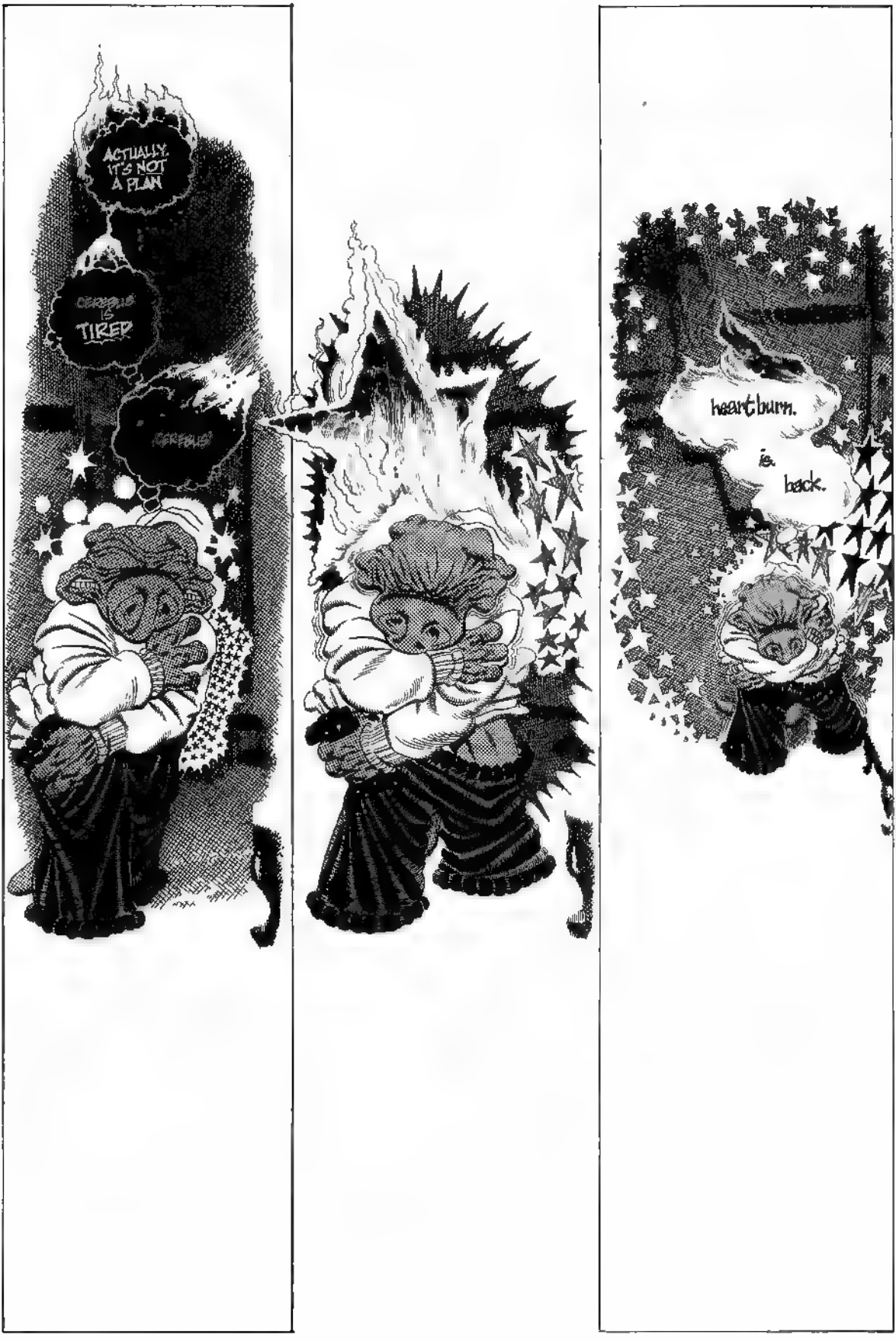

I'LL SEE THAT THE REPTILE-DEMENTING GEEK THIS RIGHT AWAY.
AND I'LL LET YOU KNOW IF WE HAVE ANY... FURTHER... REQUIREMENTS

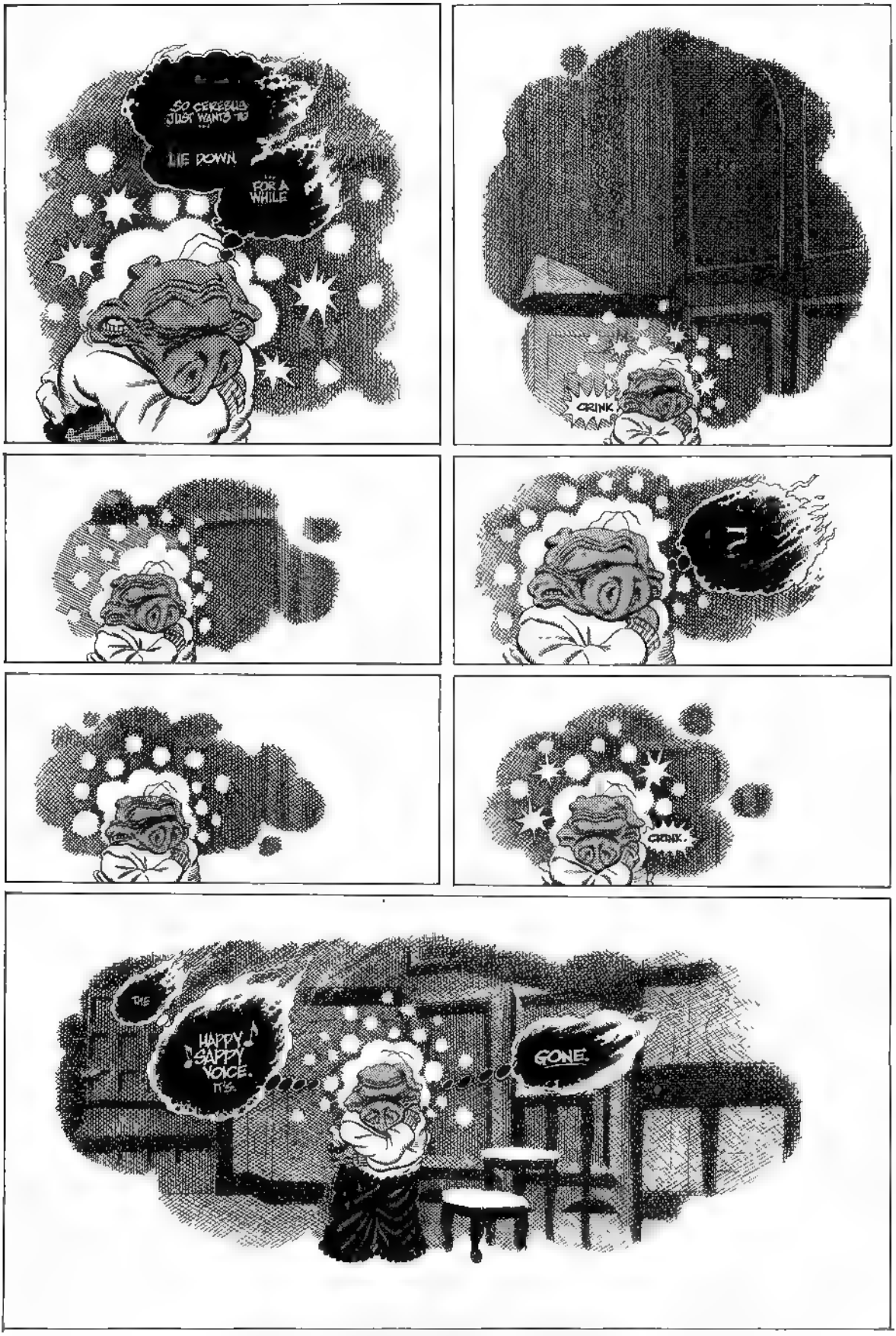

HE

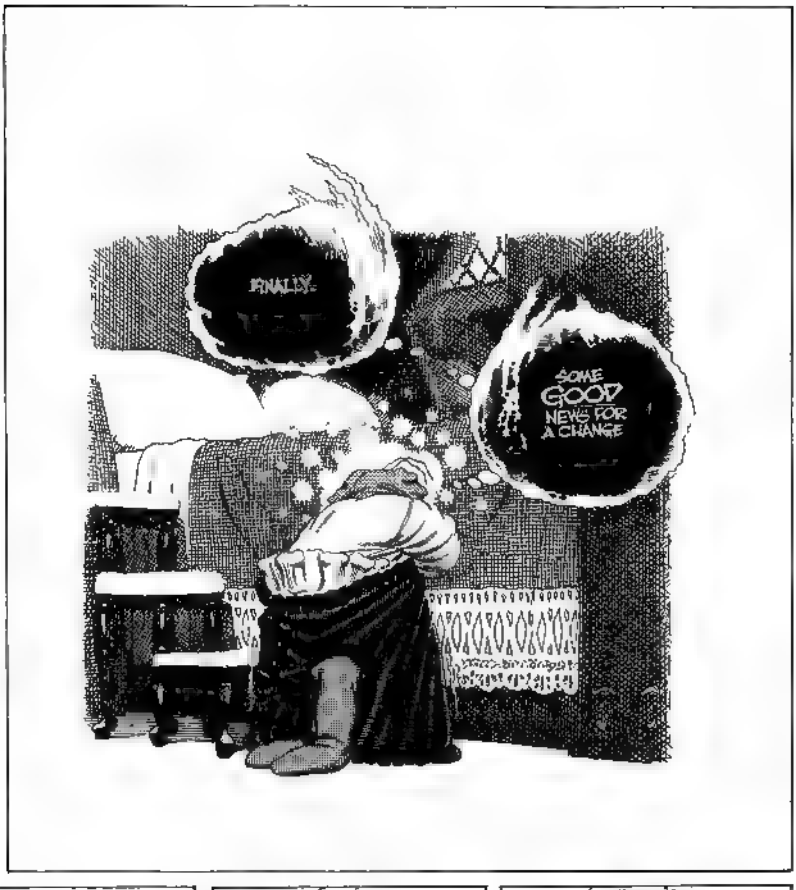

CEREBUS SHOULDN'T HAVE SIGNED THAT
IT DOESN'T MATTER. CEREBUS IS SUNK. CEREBUS IS SCREWED. CEREBUS' GOOSE IS COOKED. CEREBUS IS TOAST. REMEMBER?
BUT MAYBE THOSE DREAMS WERE JUST A WARNING FROM GOD NOT TO SIGN THAT STATEMENT
TOO LATE! BUT.
THE ONLY THING THAT REALLY MATTERS IS GETTING SHEP-SHEP IN HERE.
SO CEREBUS AND SHEP-SHEP CAN PUT OUR HEADS TOGETHER...
...WHILE THERE'S STILL TIME. AFTER...
...WHEN SHEP-SHEP HAS TAKEN CEREBUS' PLACE...
...HE CAN TEAR UP THE STATEMENT.
BUT...


Tak Tak Tak
LIMP
BUT PERSEUS SHOULDN'T HAVE SIGNED THAT

NOT NECESSARILY! IF CERBERUS TURNS AROUND REAL FAST AND RACES BACK TO THE DOOR AND POUNDS ON IT YELLING "COME BACK!" "COME BACK!"
(RIGHT IT WOULD PROBABLY STILL BE TOO LATE)
LUMP
?
WHERE'S EVERYBODY GOING?
?!
LUMP
BACK TO BED?!
THAT'S BRILLIANT!
(WHY DIDN'T CERBERUS THINK OF THAT BEFORE?) WHEN SHEP-SHEP COMES IN CERBERUS WILL BE IN BED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY— SHEP-SHEP WILL THINK CERBERUS IS DYING SO HE'LL KNOW HOW SERIOUS THE SITUATION IS!
WHAT. A. GREAT. PLAN!
LUMP


ACTUALLY. IT'S NOT A PLAN
CERBERUS IS TIRED
CERBERUS!
heartburn.
is
back.

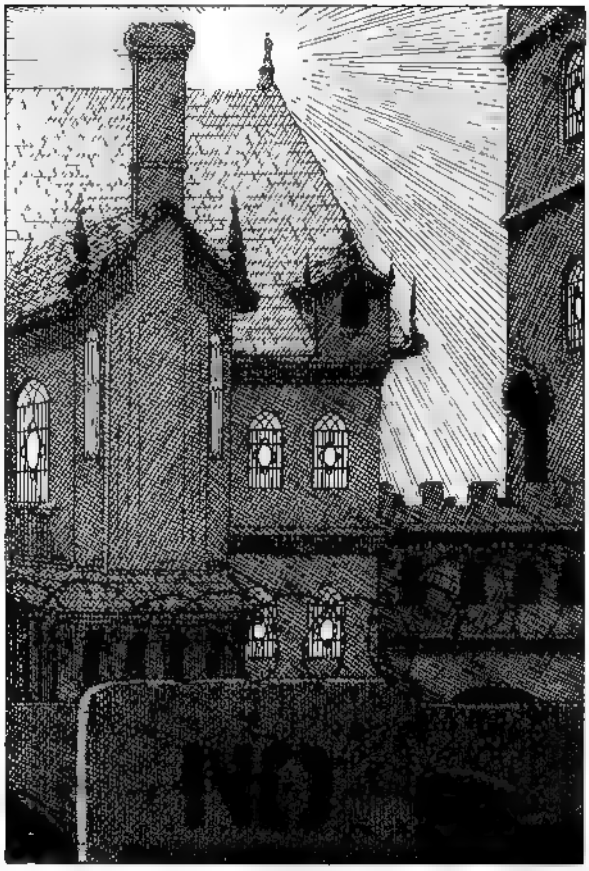

SO CEREBELLA JUST WANTS TO
LIE DOWN
FOR A WHILE
CRINK.
THE
HAPPY SAPPY VOICE. IT'S
GONE.

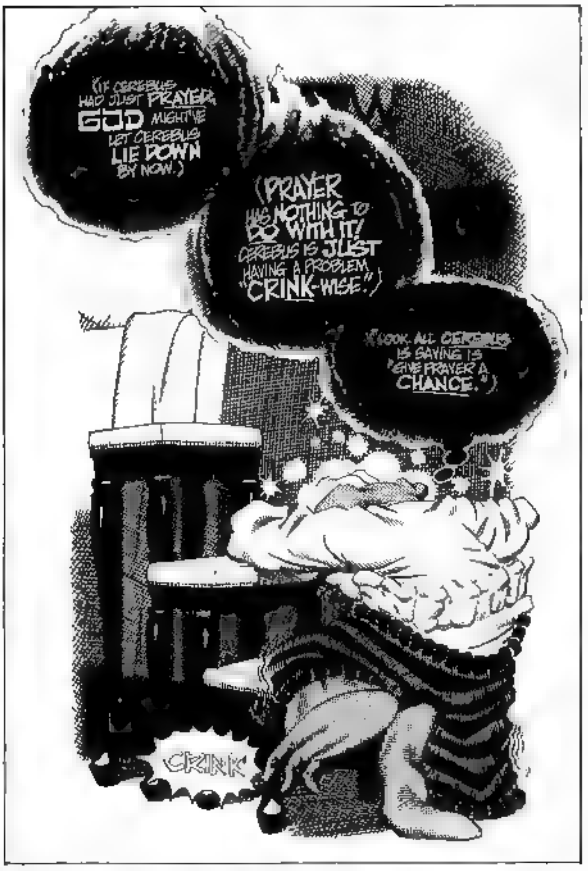

FINALLY.
SOME GOOD NEWS FOR A CHANGE

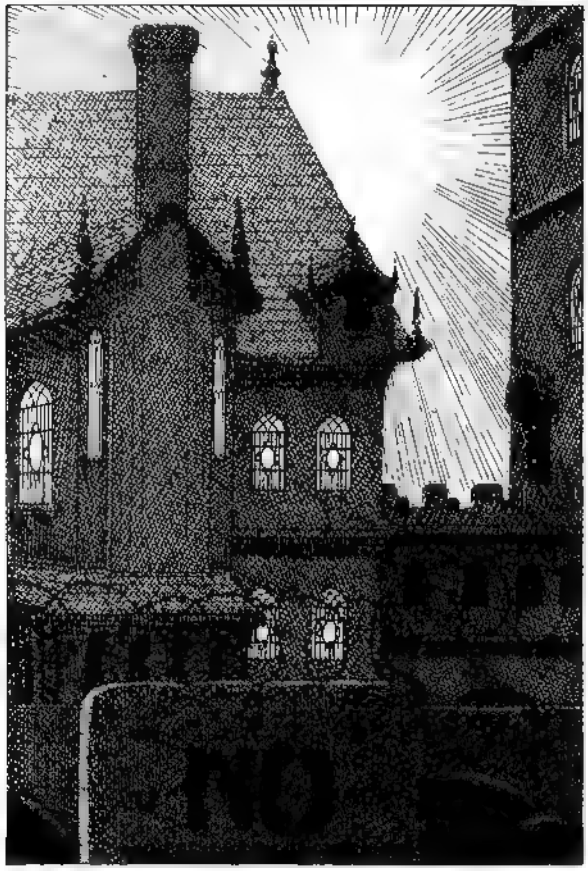
BEFORE LYING DOWN, CEREBUS SHOULD PRAY.
CRINK

WHAT THE HELL FOR? CEREBUS IS SUNK...CEREBUS IS SCREWED
(AND SETRA AND SETRA)
THUMP
THE HAPPY CRAPPY VOICE WOULD SAY, "THAT'S WHEN PRAYER DOES THE MOST FORTUNATELY (LIKE CEREBUS SAID)
CRINK

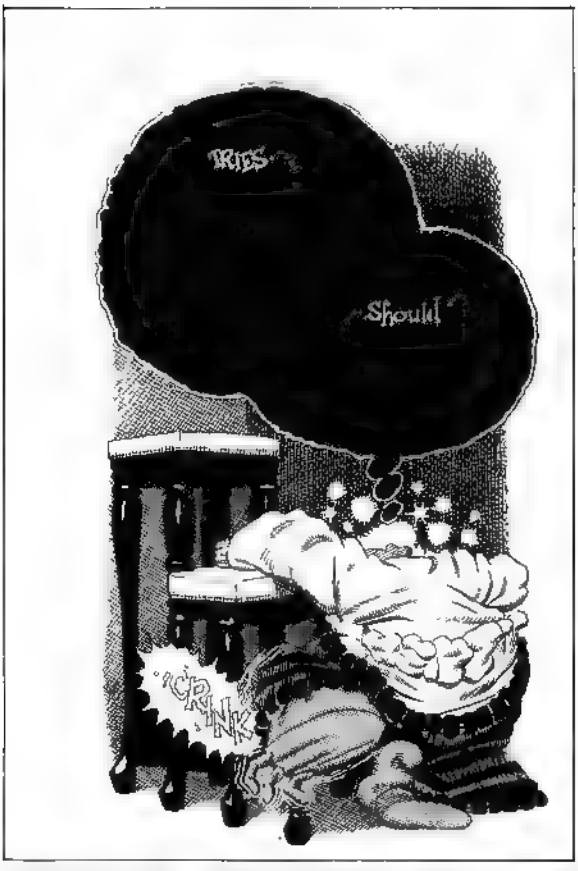
THE HAPPY CRAPPY VOICE IS GONE.
THUMP

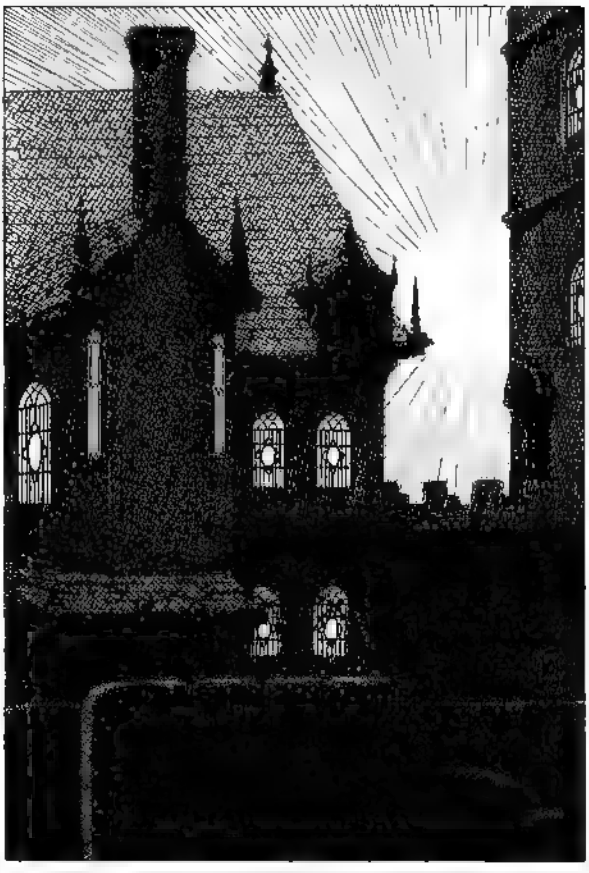


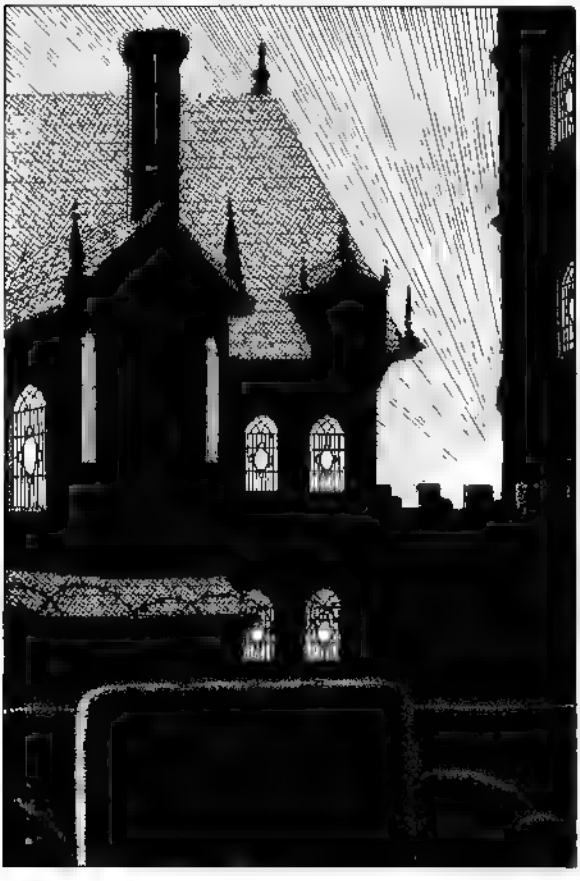

(IF CEREBUS HAD JUST PRAYED, GOD MIGHT'VE LET CEREBUS LIE DOWN BY NOW.)
(PRAYER HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT! CEREBUS IS JUST HAVING A PROBLEM "CRINK-WISE.")
(LOOK. ALL CEREBUS IS SAYING IS "GIVE PRAYER A CHANCE.")
CRINK

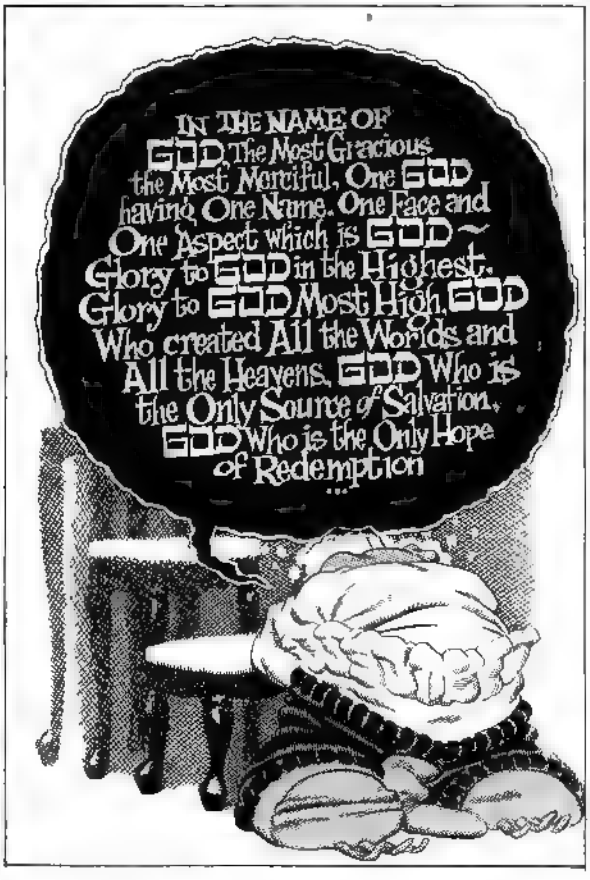


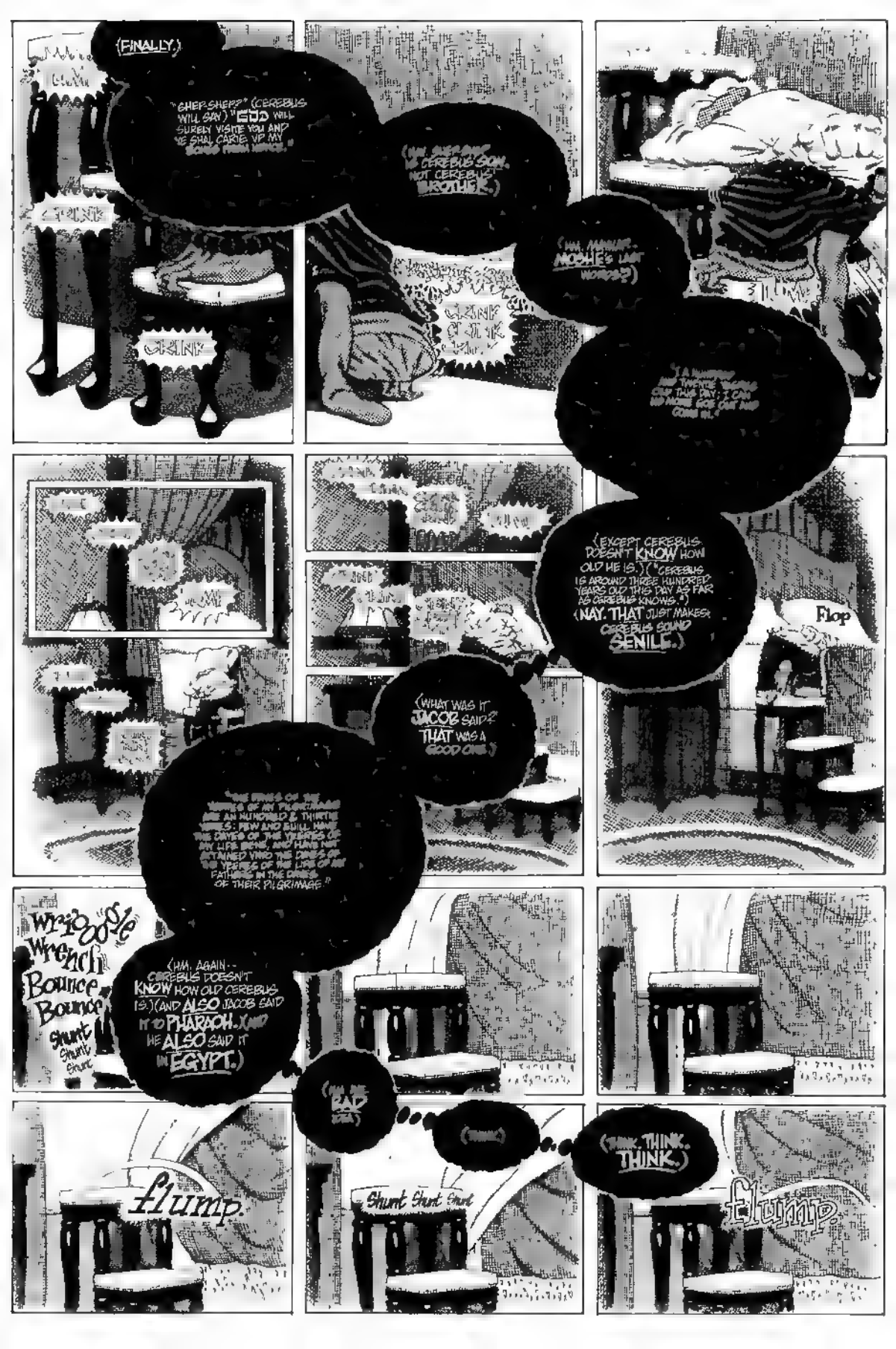
(CEREBUS! "CRINKS" ARE BARELY GETTING OFF THE FLOOR! CEREBUS WON'T BE ABLE TO STAND UP SOON, LET ALONE CLIMB UP INTO BED.)
(CEREBUS ALMOST GOT IT LAST TIME... JUST A FEW MORE TRIES SHOULD...)
CRINK

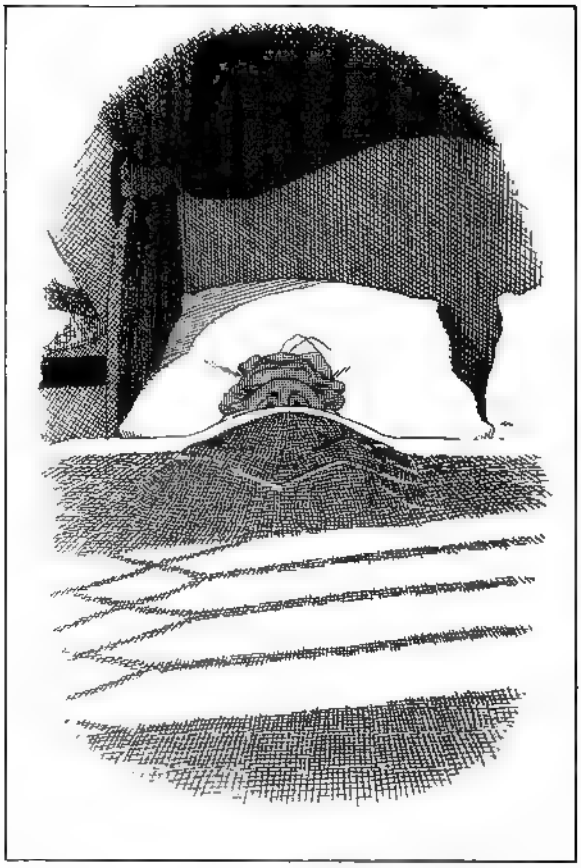

TRIES
Should
CRINK

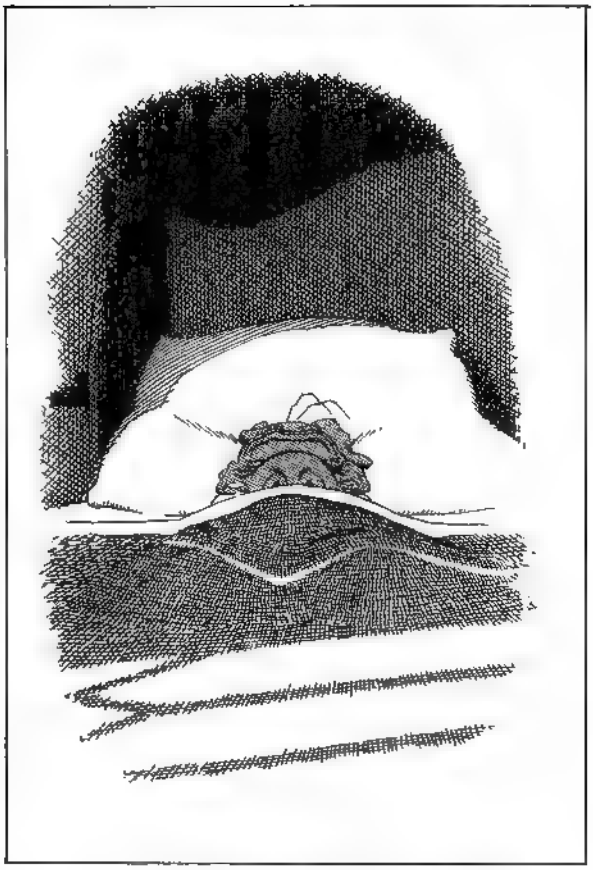


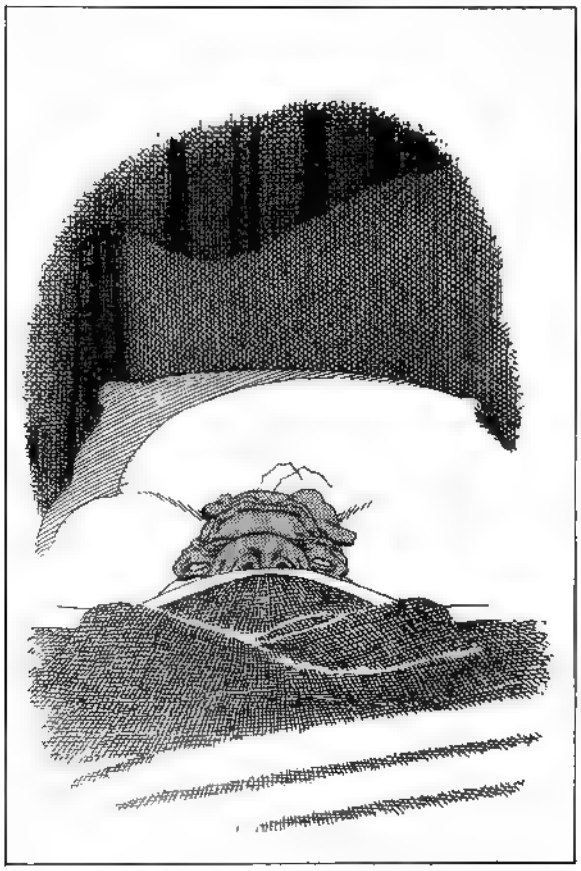



IN THE NAME OF GOD The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, One GOD having One Name. One Face and One Aspect which is GOD ~ Glory to GOD in the Highest. Glory to GOD Most High. GOD Who created All the Worlds and All the Heavens. GOD Who is the Only Source of Salvation. GOD Who is the Only Hope of Redemption ...


(FINALLY.)
CLANK
"SHEP-SHEP?" (CEREBUS WILL SAY.) "GOD WILL SURELY VISITE YOU AND YE SHAL CARRIE UP MY BONES FROM HENCE."
(HM. MAYBE I'M CEREBUS' SON, NOT CEREBUS' BROTHER.)
CLANK CLANK
(HM. MAYBE MOSHE'S LAST WORDS?)
CLANK
(A HUNDRED AND TWENTIE YEARS OLD THIS DAY. I CAN NO MORE SEE OUT HIM GOING IN.)
(EXCEPT CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW HOW OLD HE IS.) ("CEREBUS IS AROUND THREE HUNDRED YEARS OLD THIS DAY AS FAR AS CEREBUS KNOWS.") (NAY. THAT JUST MAKES CEREBUS SOUND SENILE.)
Flop
(WHAT WAS IT JACOB SAID? THAT WAS A GOOD ONE.)
"THE DAYES OF THE YEARES OF MY PILGRIMAGE ARE AN HUNDRED & THIRTIE YEARES: FEW AND EVILL HAVE THE DAYES OF THE YEARES OF MY LIFE BEEN, AND HAVE NOT ATTAINED UNTO THE DAYES OF THE YEARES OF THE LIFE OF MY FATHERS IN THE DAYES OF THEIR PILGRIMAGE."
Wrigoosle Wrench Bounce Bounce Shunt Shunt Shunt
(HM. AGAIN -- CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW HOW OLD CEREBUS IS.) (AND ALSO JACOB SAID IT TO PHARAOH. AND HE ALSO SAID IT IN EGYPT.)
(HM. NOT BAD ONE.)
(HMM.)
(HMM. THINK. THINK. THINK.)
flump.
Shunt Shunt Shunt
flump.







MY ROSE
CEREBRUS
FEEL LIKE
SAYING
"ROSEBUD"
ALL OF A
SUDDEN?

Getting Riel

part three

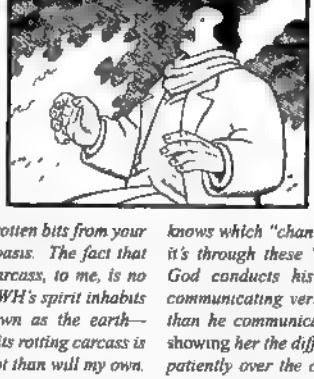
Getting *Riel*

Chester Brown discusses his graphic novel,
Louis Riel

Part Three

In the conclusion of the last installment you said, "You might as well tell me that eating food is one of YHWH's ways of keeping us distracted from God." Well certainly. In the sense that I see all "sensory adherence" as a distraction from God. There are degrees of the distraction. I can eat a plastic-wrapped sandwich just to keep powering the rotting carcass that I—that is, my soul—inhabits. Or I can spend a month's wages on cordon bleu cooking in a top New York restaurant. The latter distraction is more severe, in my view. I'm going to be thinking about the money, proper table manners, my selection(s) and then focusing on the food when it gets there. God is going to be very far from my thoughts.

It seems to me an implication of incarnating physically. A substantial number of spirits hurled outward from the Big Bang, it seems to me, chose to incarnate physically for the exact reason that it allowed them to get away from the realm of spirit. Part of the price that you have to pay for incarnating physically is that you have to keep your rotting carcass from rotting too quickly. You have to expel rotten bits from your rotting carcass on a regular basis. The fact that my spirit inhabits a rotting carcass, to me, is no different from the fact that YHWH's spirit inhabits the rotting husk of rock known as the earth—except, of course, that his/her/its rotting carcass is going to take a lot longer to rot than will my own. A rotting carcass insulates you from the realm of spirit except in indirect tangential connections like sleep, hypnotic states, mystical events, voices in the head, UFOs and so on. I see incarnating physically as an extreme form of attempting to do a Jonah" to attempt to flee from God, Who. I would assume is inescapable in the realm of spirit. It seems to me that you can judge how you're doing by the extent to which you have incarnated physically and how far from the Big Bang the incarnation took place. If you consider how far our little flyspeck of a planet is from the Big Bang, I think it bodes ill for the lot of us. But I think God takes this very much into account. As I indicated in "Chasing YHWH," I think that God's purpose through Judaism, Christianity and Islam is to help YHWH to remember who he/she/it actually is and the choices he/she/it made long, long ago which led to his/her/it's present circumstance. As far as I can see, that's the role of human beings—billions and billions of tiny little spirits inside rotting carcasses busily doing their tiny little physical being "things" on top of he/she/it. He/she/it doesn't like us as a matter of policy, but he/she/it—aware of all these tiny spirits in a profound way because of their relatively small size—gets "sucked in" spite of his/her/itself. It's like television: having incarnated physically to get away from God there's really not much else to do while you're waiting for your carcass to rot through completely. Might as well see what's on. Of course, God is omniscient so He always knows which "channels" YHWH is partial to. And it's through these "channels" in particular that God conducts his dialogue with YHWH—not communicating verbally with him/her/it anymore than he communicates verbally with us—but by showing her the difference between good and evil, patiently over the course of millions of years so that ultimately he/she/it will choose to return to God once his/her/its carcass rots completely and earth's molten core "hatches out". Which, it seems to me, is only a part of the process. Just as we are being used to "subdue the earth" (as God instructed us in Genesis *1), I think the earth is being used to "subdue the sun." The earth's life is being enacted to persuade the sun's spirit—when his/her/its carcass rots—to return to God. This process, I would imagine, is duplicated*



everywhere in the universe. Every little flyspeck chunk of rock and every star, having incarnated physically, thinks itself to be God. God is, in a sense, "playing chess" with spirits wherever they have found themselves anywhere in the universe—like one of those grand masters who can play twenty games simultaneously. The challenge being to persuade everyone who has fled from Him—into a specific state of existence which precludes perceiving Him (except through faith)—that He actually exists and that returning to Him is preferable to just ending up crushed inside a black hole or adrift in a vacuum. It seems to me that returning to God is a very quick step at death. God is omnipresent. If you choose to return to Him, He's right there. The alternative, as far as I can see—faith in anyone or anything besides God—is a long, long walk home to the Big Bang.

But speaking of Swedenborg, I remember vividly my visit to Toronto, one of the rare times that Seth was there and, as you say, Seth is the leader. Seth was going shopping for records and books, so you and Joe and I basically follow Seth whither Seth goeth. Seth's very good about it. Says this is where he's going and leaves it up to everyone to make up their own minds, but everyone's mind is made up. Whither Seth goeth so goeth we all. Since a big part of my enjoyment of the trips to Toronto has been the fact that I'm not working, having someone to trail around behind without having to think about where we're going is an added bonus. This particular occasion was while I was developing "Chasing YHWH" and, as far as I remember, it was after Louis Riel *5 had come out and I was very eager to talk to you about the panels depicting Riel's mystical experience. It was, to me, definitely YHWH, but I couldn't talk to you about it without spoiling "Chasing YHWH," so I tried talking around it. I asked you if you thought that had been an actual experience or if Riel had imagined it. Which was a pretty futile avenue of inquiry. One of the points of incarnating physically is it not only separates you from an actual awareness of God, it separates you from actual awareness of other awarenesses. No one knows what is going on inside of any other rotting carcass but his own—and even that only imperfectly.*

Seeing that it was a futile avenue of inquiry, you shifted the subject, asking if I had heard of Swedenborg. As I told you at the time, the only contact I had had with Swedenborg was a girl that I slept with for about a week—the one I had broken my 1989 to 1991 celibacy period with, the only girl I ever slept with who was taller than me—who was a Swedenborgian and whose father (strangely enough) had ended up being my limo driver a couple of times and had said, "I think you know my daughter." And then he said her name. And what I thought *was "Sir, your daughter was a great lay but nutty as a fruitcake." Of course, I just asked him how she was. Turns out she was married by that point, so I was able to do a more socially acceptable, "Oh, how nice. You must tell her Dave Sim says hello."*

Not much of a steeping in Swedenborgianism. You gave me a crash course while we were waiting to be seated in Sushi on Bloor, and I must admit, I thought right off the top, Yep, that's YHWH all right.

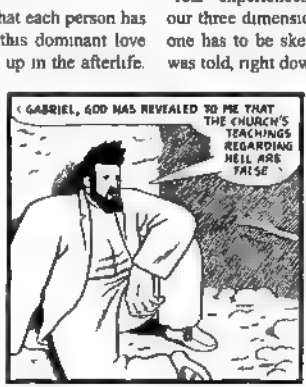
That's going back a couple of years now and you had just started reading about Swedenborg. So, while I'm working on what I saw in Louis Riel's religious/mystical experiences, why don't you refresh my memory about the Church of New Jerusalem and the elements of Swedenborg's philosophy that appealed to you?

Actually, I was just ending my several months of studying Swedenborg, not starting them, when we talked about him. I haven't read anything by or about him since, and so my memory on the subject is a little bit fuzzy.

In 1745, Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), after an intense period of studying the Bible, found himself having out-of-body experiences in

which he was able to enter into spiritual realms: a spirit-world (which was like Purgatory) and also Heaven and Hell. "Out-of-body experiences"—that's probably the wrong term now that I think about it. It wasn't that he left his body, it was more like tuning out of this world and tuning into the spiritual one. Reading several of his books, I became convinced that he hadn't made up his experiences—that he'd reported what he thought had really happened to him.

He was told by the angels that each person has a single dominant love. It's this dominant love that determines where we end up in the afterlife. Dominant loves that are selfish lead to Hell and dominant loves that are characterized by love for others or love for God lead to Heaven.



Our dominant love can change over the course of a life. We can have one dominant love when we're twenty and a different one when we're eighty. The possibility of changing this dominant love ends at death. It then defines us for the rest of eternity. Denizens of Hell can't work their way up to Heaven. But, for the most part, denizens of Hell don't *want* to get into Heaven. Hell's inhabitants find Heaven as unpleasant as the angels find Hell.

Swedenborg thought that the afterlife was a continuation of our psychological state in this world. That is, in a way, we already live in either Heaven or Hell before we die. He thought that this was what Jesus meant when he said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." This made sense to me. He believed that this was true no matter what a person's religion was. In others words, Hindus, Zoroastrians, Pagans, etc. could all get into Heaven. This tolerant attitude toward other religious seemed surprising to me for a Christian of his day, and also inclined me in the direction of accepting what he wrote.

The book by Swedenborg that I found problematic was *The Worlds in Space* (also known as *The Earths in the Universe*). In it, he describes encounters with spirits from planets in our solar system (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn) who claimed that those worlds are inhabited by humans. Swedenborg believed them. If the spirits could give him incorrect information on that matter, it—in my opinion—calls into question all of the information he received in the spiritual realm.

I still take Swedenborg seriously—I don't think he was crazy or delusional. I think he had "real" experiences in a place that is as "real" as our three dimensional material realm, but I think one has to be skeptical about *everything* that he was told, right down to whether the good place he visited was Heaven and whether the bad place he visited was Hell.

I know that I was at the end of reading about Swedenborg when we talked about him because *The Worlds in Space* was the last book I read by him, and I remember mentioning it to you.

I tend to see the tenets of Islam as a safe haven for the reason that, in my opinion, submission to the will of God and to four of the five pillars of Islam (I won't be even attempting a pilgrimage to Mecca until the House of Saud collapses and the war on terrorism has the Wahabites on the run) alleviates the need to consider what else I believe in the realm of spirit. For me, when it comes to the idea of a "dominant love" in someone's life—I can far more readily believe in God than I can believe in love. I've experienced the omnipresence of God. Family "love," girlfriend "love," "love" of friends—it's either "scam" or "sex" misspelled (apologies to Harlan Ellison who has "gone over to the other side" since then). If any of our existence has to do with love, I am sincerely screwed.

I see intimations of YHWH in Swedenborg's philosophy. One of the reasons that Muhammad was a polytheist, I believe, was that—by the sixth century—monasticism was becoming Big in the Christian church. I suspect this was a consequence (intended by God but unanticipated by YHWH) of the Synoptic Jesus. It's a lot easier

to follow the Synoptic Jesus' teachings if you stay the hell away from women and worldly temptations than it is otherwise. Hardly the he/she/it ideal YHWH would be partial to. I believe the parts of the Koran that state explicitly that no "warranty" was sent down for monasticism are YHWH contributions.

It seems to me that Swedenborg's philosophy has a lot of YHWH in its tolerance of paganism and belief that pagans can get into Heaven (I still maintain that "heaven" is just earth's atmosphere, commandeered by YHWH for her own "Oz the Great and Powerful" delusional seven-level movie set—"I'm ready for my close-up, Mr DeMille" -but, I'm getting ahead of our discussion).

This resonates with the great scene in Louis Riel *where the Métis are under fire and Riel is telling Gabriel Dumont that there is a Hell, but it won't last forever. Eventually every sinner will be reconciled with God and everyone will live in heaven. I always crack up at Dumont's <"sounds good to me.">. I'm always suspicious of spiritual revelations that "sound good to me". Like reincarnation. If you think you have a chance of coming back, why not wait 'til next time to make a real effort? But, consider the consequences of not exerting yourself flat out for your entire life if this is your only shot at it.*

*But, as you say, it does seem uncharacteristically tolerant for a Christian of his time. And it has occurred to me more than once that God might be extremely tolerant of largely delusional faiths so long as God is preeminent in them. After all, from the vantage point of an omniscient being delusional would be a relative term: all human thought and belief would be implicitly delusional including our deepest mental perceptions of God. As I've said elsewhere, I would imagine that Jews—although they've been worshipping YHWH for millennia—*intended *to worship God (the men, anyway) and that God knows that. Just as God knows, I would imagine, which Christians accept God's preeminence and which Christians are closet Goddess worshippers with their devotion to Our Lady.*

I also wouldn't be too quick to rule out the existence of human spirits on the other worlds in our solar system. I think as the sun waxes in intensity, it will warm Mars and "thaw out" the spirits that will be told to "be fruitful and multiply" and enact the next part of God's chess game with the YHWH in Mars' core (who will believe that he/she/it is God) after the earth's chess game has ended in a win, a loss or a draw. Just as I assume that before the sun reached its present intensity, it probably "thawed out" the spirits on Venus who have already enacted their own multi-million year-long chess game, crawling around on the surface of Venus' YHWH and attempting to "subdue" he/she/it and explain to he/she/it that he/she/it isn't God, just another chunk of rock in the near-infinite expanse of His Creation.

Despite my opinions about the romantic eternal-love ideal, I have no trouble believing in the reality of love or of any emotion. They're mental experiences—if my thoughts are "real" then so are my emotions. I may not always like my emotional reactions (certainly not the ones most people would agree are negative, like anger or hatred) but I have them.

You wrote: "Family 'love,' girlfriend 'love,' 'love' of friends—it's either 'scam' or 'sex' misspelled". Let's look at "love of friends" and my friendship with Seth as an example. "Scam" or "sex"—we're both heterosexual men, so we can dismiss sex right off the bat. "Scam"? Where's the scam? In a scam, isn't someone trying to deceive someone else for some sort of material gain? I can tell you that when I met Seth 16 years ago, I didn't think, "Hey, I'll bet if I pretend to like this guy and hang out with him a lot he'll give me free copies of all the comics he produces in the future." That would have been a pretty stupid scam. No, I hang out with him because I enjoy his company. There's no scam.

Does God think love is important? I wouldn't know, but it seems to me that on a social level, love binds people together and creates harmony and peace. It looks like a good thing to me (or should I say, "Sounds good to me"?)

Anyway, Swedenborg's idea of a dominant love doesn't necessarily refer to emotional ties between people, it could be a preference for an activity or experience that doesn't involve emotions and that one prefers for rational reasons.

"God might be extremely tolerant of largely delusional faiths so long as God is preeminent in them." Yes, Swedenborg is quite clear that one has to have some kind of concept of the Divine. Atheists and materialists are headed for Hell according to him. I don't remember a passage in which he specifically mentions pagans—I was extrapolating because, from the little I know about pagans, they have some kind of concept of the Divine.

Here's a passage by Swedenborg:

"Non-Christians are born just as human as people within the church, who are in fact few by comparison. It is not their fault that they do not know the Lord. So anyone who thinks from any enlightened reason at all can see that no one is born for hell. The Lord is actually love itself and his love is an intent to save everyone. So he provides that everyone shall have some religion, an acknowledgment of the Divine Being through that religion, and an inner life. That is, living according to one's religious principles is an inner life, for then we focus on the Divine, and to the extent that we do focus on the Divine, we do not focus on the world, but move away from the world and therefore from a worldly life, which is an outward life.

"People can realize that non-Christians as well as Christians are saved if they know what constitutes heaven in us; for heaven is within us, and people who have heaven within them come into heaven. The heaven within us is our acknowledgment of the Divine and our being led by the Divine. The beginning and foundation of every religion is its acknowledgment of the Divine Being, a religion that does not acknowledge the Divine Being is not a religion at all. The precepts of every religion focus on worship, that is, on how the Divine is to be honored so that we will be acceptable in its sight, and when this fully occupies the mind (or, to the extent that we intend this or love this) we are being led by the Lord.

"It is recognized that non-Christians live lives that are just as moral as the lives of Christians—many of them, in fact, live more moral lives. A moral life may be lived either to satisfy the Divine or to satisfy people in this world. A moral life that is lived to satisfy the Divine is a spiritual life. The two look alike in outward form, but inwardly they are totally different. One saves us, the other does not. This is because if we live a moral life to satisfy the Divine we are being led by the Divine; while if we live a moral life to satisfy people in this world, we are being led by ourselves." (*Heaven and Hell*, s. 318)

Its probably significant that while Swedenborg almost always refers to God as a male, in the above passage he calls the Divine an "it".

I'm holding myself back here. I'm very curious about how you've "experienced the omnipresence of God" and want to ask you to elaborate, but, since you've warned me that the upcoming "What I think happened to Louis Riel" is so lengthy, I'm hesitant to get into it.

Woke up at 1 42 this morning sufficiently "spiritually uncomfortable" that I was unable to get back to sleep even after praying. Lay there for an hour, willing myself to go back to sleep (particularly with 63 pages left to go on Cerebus, *sleep has become critically important). Finally, got up and came upstairs to see if any faxes had come in over the Sabbath. And here's your fax. This, to me, is the "omnipresence of God" Very unusual for me to check for a fax at 3 a.m., but I can see His point. If I'm going to clean up the studio, get everything prepped for Ger coming in tomorrow, and get my page done, 3 a.m. is probably the best time to answer your fax.*

When I began fasting in Ramadan, and then began praying 5 times a day and then began doing the ritual ablutions before praying and then (most recently) began fasting as a regular habit, I saw it as, basically, just cleaning up my act. A twelve-step program with God at the head of it, so to speak. What I hadn't anticipated was the level of (again, I'm hesitant to use the term because of my largely atheistic audience, but there isn't a more accurate one) demonic possession in the world. The net effect of that was to come to see family "love" and girlfriend "love" and "love" of friends as a scam. Whereas previously, like most people—just for the sake of politeness and to avoid offending others—in conversation I would agree with a lot of things that I didn't actually agree with· or say something neutral like "it takes all kinds" or "it's a strange old world, isn't it?" The more I prayed, the more I read scripture and the more I fasted, the more it became a situation where, in conversation, people were unwilling to let it go at that and would become more and more

insistent on their viewpoint and less amenable to my "neutralisms". The easy exchange of viewpoints between two atheists or an atheist and an agnostic had been supplanted by Dave Sim versus his adversaries. I irritated people, most particularly my family who would rattle on in their atheistic way while I sat there smiling politely but inwardly wondering if I really should be listening to this and not saying something wasn't I endorsing their atheism by holding my peace? But, it was three-against-one, majority rules, don't make waves, Honour thy father and thy mother, blah, blah, blah. Of course, eventually one of them would ask me a question and then I was faced with, do I answer honestly and essentially waylay the majority's preferred direction of discourse or do I lie in the interests of not making waves? Again, the "neutralisms" weren't working anymore. So, as would invariably happen with family or friends, I would end up waylaying the conversation and everyone would get more and more irritated and clearly desperate to get back to some atheistic common ground since what I was talking about was, to them, just so much religious twaddle. And, of course they're of the TV generation where each person gets fifteen seconds to say something and then it's someone else's turn. As you can see from this dialogue, I can explain my viewpoint on, as an example, "what about stem-cell research?" but it's going to take me ten minutes just to set the groundwork for what I'm ultimately going to have to say. That's monopolizing the conversation in the atheistic world where, as I say, conversation is seen as verbal badminton (and not even competitive badminton, but "how long can we cooperate in keeping this bird aloft?" feminist-style badminton)

So, that's a lot of the "scam" that I see in today's world. Through the pernicious influence of television, I can get fifteen seconds into an explanation and then anyone in the room, under our new societal rules, is at liberty to interject with another question. And if I say, "Why do you ask me a question and then interrupt when I'm answering it?" then I'm being societally offensive, not playing the game. Everyone will subside (although irritated) for another fifteen seconds but I know they've stopped listening because I'm not playing the game—going along with their societal "scam" of how a conversation is conducted. And, of course, everyone I know—or, rather, knew—is an atheist (and most of them are irretrievable alcoholics) so, from what I can see, they are fair game for YHWH who makes a point of "taking possession" of them when I'm around and finding the most offensive conversational topics in an effort to get under my skin

[You are pretty much the only exception that I found to this "rule". Remember the dinner that you and I and Joe and Seth and Al Bunce had at the Senator in Toronto? Where we had met at the Sheraton and I told everyone that I was fasting which led to a discussion of faith in God and quickly out of a discussion of faith in God and then we were off taking forever to find the place (Seth can be, I think you'd agree, an imperfect leader)? You hadn't said anything since the Sheraton—probably half an hour before—and suddenly you turned around and said to me, "I think I believe in God." Likewise when you and I have dinner at Peter Pan (at a table where I can watch the girls going by) You listen until I'm done saying what I have to say. And then it looks as if your soul has to undo all the snap-fasteners in your jaw, one at a time. And I don't say a word. Finally the last snap fastener is undone and out comes this perfect distillation of what it is you have to say, usually in two or three sentences. Like most of this dialogue]

A perfect example of this "demonic possession" would be this March just past when I finally "broke" with my family—the last phone conversation with my sister—when she said, "You know it's interesting that with all the praying that you do, you never once prayed for your parents." Well, you know, get thee behind me, Satan. How the hell would <u>you</u> know that I've never once prayed for my parents?

[Of course, it's true as, I assume, YHWH well knew. I don't think it's right to pray to God <u>for</u> anything or <u>for</u> anyone (in fact, the only thing I ever prayed to God for was the strength to get through Christmas at my parents'). The point of prayer, to me, is to get down on my knees five times a day and express aloud that I still "hold these truths to be self-evident" To pray to God –

asking Him to, say, "heal my mother" seems to me to be putting God in a nutcracker. I assume that my mother's ill health is as a result of all the bad decisions that she has made over the course of her life, not the least of which is choosing to be an atheist. Who am I to say to God, "Please take whatever favourable disposition you might have towards me and use some part of it to heal my mother's infirmities?" For what? So she can go home and tell everyone about the great hospital and the great doctors that healed her? No, I made the commitment to God early on that anything I was doing that caused Him to be favourably disposed towards me, He should just use that wherever it would be the most useful in the Big Plan. I mean, sure I'll take whatever blessing He wants to send my way, but I know that its spiritually more beneficial to do without "blessings" in this world. Obviously, I would love to have an "Entitles bearer to One Free Fornication" card or an "Entitles bearer to One Free Trip to a University-Age Club" card signed by God but, to say that I'm not holding my breath dramatically understates the situation.]

So, I said to my sister, "They're atheists." My point being that it would be a screwy kind of belief in God that would make me think that I should pray to God on behalf of atheists. Which my sister jumped on with "They're still human beings!" Which, of course, is the highest attribute and credential of which an atheist is capable of perceiving. In my ears it just sounds like "They're bags of chemicals and protoplasm!" Yes, they are, indeed, bags of chemicals and protoplasm. Yes, they are, indeed, human beings, but, as I said to her (trying to keep to the television-dictated level of sound-bite-as-conversation), 'There's still a difference between right and wrong." That pretty much ended it, to my great relief. I walked around clenched for a few weeks, waiting for some massive repercussion of violating "Honour thy father and thy mother" to descend upon me. And then realized that I was right. God had the same level of interest in my family that they have in Him. It was a non-event. "Let the dead bury their dead," as the Synoptic Jesus so aptly put it.

Which brings me the long-way around to Swedenborg and the passage that you cite which like so much of theology (and the Bible and the Koran) seems composed of alternating "God", "Not God"; "God"; "Not God". The word "human" in the first line sets off alarm bells. One of YHWH's top priorities is to get us all to view men and women as interchangeable bags of chemicals and protoplasm. Likewise the use of the term "the Lord". If I talked to people who used the term "the Lord," I would have to make a point of saying, "Do you mean God?" Which would only get them irritated since another of YHWH's priorities, as I see it is to make God and Lord interchangeable. Good example in the next line: "The Lord is actually love itself [!] and his love is an intent to save everyone." If this is God, then that's a fine and, it seems to me, (mostly) accurate statement. If its YHWH then it's, to me, pernicious and perverse since, from what I can see, YHWH wants to "save" everyone from God. Likewise "the Divine Being" Do you mean God? Or do you mean Gloria-Swanson-In-the-Clouds? Just say "God" and save us some nomenclature trouble. That would, in my experience, just irritate the spirit that's inhabiting them. In fact, I agree with the entire Swedenborg passage as long as you substitute God for "Lord" "the Lord" "the Divine" and "Divine Being"

No need to hold yourself back, Chet—it's a decided improvement to me over your being evasive and foot-dragging. This ain't the CBC. We have nothing but room for an actual exchange of viewpoints. The only boundary is Gerhard finishing the backgrounds on this issue's story which should be (let me just check the calendar here) two weeks from tomorrow.

Everything else is just extra newsprint.

The "What I think happened to Louis Riel" is nearing completion—a couple of more runs through should do it—and runs around six pages.

It's now 5:18, my usual wake-up time. God's immaculate sense of timing (including the hour he knew I would spend tossing and turning).

I looked for a love-is-a-scam message in the glimpse into the Sim family that you described (Dave Sim irritates most people, therefore love is a scam. No that doesn't work. People only want to talk in TV-style sound-bites, therefore love is a scam. No that doesn't make sense). I found

one—I'm not sure it's the one that you intended, but I'll outline it anyway.

I think love is enjoyment. If we enjoy a certain thing, we love it. If we enjoy being in someone's presence, we love them.

It sounds like you've stopped enjoying your family's presence (if you ever did) and they may have stopped enjoying your presence. I don't *know* that they have. I think people can disagree and argue and interrupt each other every fifteen seconds and still enjoy each other's company. But for the sake of argument, and because I think it might be your point, let's say that your family doesn't love you, and they would never admit to not loving you and, if asked, might insist that they *do* love you, therefore there's some kind of deceit going on, perhaps self-deceit, perhaps conscious deceit. In other words: a scam.

I hope I'm correctly guessing your point.

If so, it hardly proves that love is a scam. It would only mean that people can lie about love like they can lie about anything. But it doesn't mean that people *always* lie about love. There are lots and lots of people in the world who are sincere about their love.

Am I being too literal in my interpretation of the word "scam"? Or perhaps you mean it in a different way.

I hope you had a good sleep last night.

Yes, I did, as a matter of fact. Something about working from 3 a.m. to 10 p.m. seems to lend itself to that.

Actually, now that I consider my choice of terminology, it seems to me that I was indulging in the same thing that I'm accusing my family (and virtually everyone else) of: hypocrisy. In my case, by hypocritically avoiding using the term "hypocrisy" by calling it a "scam" (which, to me anyway, has a much more light-hearted sound). I alluded to this before in our conversation in the coffee shop about how you thought that people were beginning to think that it was okay to let Dave Sim back into human society. Because of the nature of what is called "love" and "friendship" there is absolutely no way for me to know what the reaction to me is. As an example: everyone in the comic-book field that I have any contact with is very nice to me to my face or over the phone. Extremely nice. Excessively nice. Which—with hypocritical liberals (again, pardon the redundancy) can mean either that they feel bad about the way that they treated me in the aftermath of 186, "Dear Jeff Smith" and/or "Tangent" that is, that they realize that the bottom line of each was a political difference of opinion and they would like to find some way to make amends and let bygones be bygones OR it could mean that they think that I'm certifiably insane and they are patronizing me in the way that hypocritical liberals always patronize those they see as being mentally ill OR they think that I'm a vile and putrescent example of humanity and they're going to prove their liberal credentials by deigning to treat me as if I wasn't a vile and putrescent example of humanity on those rare occasions where, for some reason, they are forced by circumstances beyond their control to talk with me face-to-face or over the phone. This is a large part of the reason that there will be no "End of Cerebus" celebration. Sure, I'd love to "patch things up" with those people who are examples of my first instance: no hard feelings. You made a mistake that undermined your own pretensions of tolerance and inclusiveness and, as liberals, you're profoundly embarrassed by it. We all make mistakes. Apology accepted. But I haven't heard any apologies, so I assume that what I am looking at is the latter two instances. In which case, no problem. I don't see myself as insane and I don't see myself as a vile and putrescent example of humanity and I certainly have no interest in "playing a role" in someone else's hypocritical liberal delusion of who and what I am. Failing an apology for the way I was treated and failing an apology for how everyone who purports to be my friends stood by and said nothing while I was treated that way, I'm perfectly happy to continue to live my life as I've lived it since that all took place. in isolation from my society in general.

Trust me. It's. No. Big. Deal.

As I say, my gut reaction when you told me that popular sentiment was changing in my favour was complete numbing horror—a profound reaction which came as a terrifically amusing surprise to me. I hadn't realized what a relief it had been to have lived apart from liberal hypocrisy (apart from dinner with my parents and Christmas with my family—both now, thank God, at an end) for a good ten years (almost). The idea of having to walk into a room at the San Diego Con or someplace and have to guess who is being nice to me for reason #1 and who is being nice to me for reasons #'s 2 and 3. As I say, numbing horror. "It's okay, Dave" I reassured myself, "They can't pass a law forcing you to subject yourself to liberal hypocrisy."

But you're right. The fact that love in my life is a scam/hypocrisy doesn't disprove its existence. On the other hand the fact that hypocritical liberals proclaim their love loudly, vehemently and relentlessly doesn't prove its existence, either.

In fact the eternal-love "hype" in our society that you've discussed at several points in our dialogue, I think, arguably includes family love. How many people actually enjoy Christmas with their families and how many people are just being hypocritical liberals and pretending that they do? God gave everyone free will the same as he gave me. If you want to believe in love—or, more perniciously, pretend to believe in love that you know, in your heart of hearts doesn't actually exist—that is your free-will choice. "I love my (sister/brother/father/mother) BUT .." followed by fifteen minutes of recrimination and vituperation looks to me (let me be charitable here) more than a little screwy. But, again, that is a perfectly valid free-will choice (he said, backing away slowly).

If people in the comic-book community are nice to you, I doubt that in most cases it has anything to do with hypocrisy -it sounds more like common courtesy to me

"The fact that hypocritical liberals proclaim their love loudly, vehemently and relentlessly doesn't prove its existence." Do you deny that people experience enjoyment? And you don't have to be a liberal to proclaim your love. I was listening to CBC radio yesterday and heard a conservative Christian who was against gay marriage assert that he loves gays but hates their sin. I don't know if he's a hypocrite or not. Maybe he actually does know some gays and he does enjoy spending time with them, or maybe he doesn't.

How many people actually enjoy Christmas with their families? A lot.

How many people are just being hypocritical and pretending that they enjoy Christmas with their families? A lot

You would have to have experienced having the whole mob turn on you and having no one raise one word of protest (apart from the "Dave Sim is entitled to his own vile and subhuman opinions the same as any other Nazi is") to understand what I mean, I think. I'm not sure who told me, but in the immediate aftermath of 186 someone asked you about me and you said, "He's fun to jam with" referring to that nonsense strip you and I did about ten years ago. That and the occasional phone call from Bob Burden counted for a lot. You were the two exceptions. But, when it comes to the hypocrisy of everyone turning against me and the subsequent hypocrisy of a bunch of them now being excessively nice—it would be nice to take it at face value but it seems too valueless—on its face or otherwise—to delude myself about it. Why waste time with people when there is no way of telling if they're sincere or lying? It always ends up that I owe them something, never the other way around. That's been my experience with love and friendship.

I do distrust the modern Christian "love the sinner, hate the sin" sentiment myself. It seems to me to presuppose that we know what actions and choices and decisions are sinful so that we, as the good people of the village, can collectively hate them. Again, mob rule. I believe each person's soul is at stake and you have to decide for yourself what you consider to be sins. Associating with you, a user of prostitutes, could be a sin—the Koran as much as says so. I'm staking my soul on the fact that I don't believe that. As I'm staking my soul on the fact that I don't believe I'm just supposed to join what I consider to be the "group-think" nearest to my own and then round off my own corners to fit in with that group.

That may be the case. It could be that you're supposed to choose a "group-think" and I could be, spiritually, completely ludicrous and hell-bound by virtue of having chosen Judaism, Christianity and Islam jointly. But, my attitude is the same as my attitude towards self-publishing. I have no problem with going down in flames, but I want to go down in my own plane if I'm going.

I got a very nice letter from a gay comics professional who has been on our freebie list for years who (surprised hell out of me, an example of stereotypical thinking on my part) is in favour of the war on terrorism. Chided me for my "limp wrist" references noting that his own wrists seem sturdy enough. I wrote back and told him that I have always considered him a "credit to his sexual preference" in exactly the way that you would never guess that he was gay (I only found out through, where else? female gossip). Gay as sexual preference, private concern, individual choice of what you intend to bring before God on Judgment Day I have no more of a problem with than I do with you using prostitutes. It's none of my business. It's between you and God. Gay as in theatrical mincing and lisping as new societal norm we all have to get used to I have a problem with. "The human right to drool on people in public" thing. Conversely, you and I were discussing a certain comics professional who is definitely not gay—and both of us thought he was gay when we met him. The "Straight Guy Seems Gay" syndrome becoming more widespread. Metrosexuals. I don't think it's a good idea, to say the least, but as long as I don't have to socialize with anyone, I don't mind watching it all "hatch

out" from the other side of a metaphorical ten-foot barge pole

I think it would be worthwhile to give those people who are just being hypocritical and pretending that they enjoy Christmas with their families a "bye," a "Get Out of Christmas Free Card". Picture a family of, say, ten people and NONE of them actually want to be there and they're all pretending for the sake of everyone else. Isn't that kind of pathetic? I mean, funny in a situation comedy way, but

Personally, I'm looking forward to spending Christmas reading John's Gospel and A Christmas Carol *out loud to myself.*

Anyway, I finally got my "what I think happened to Riel" piece finished. Here goes

I must say, you do a great job in the fourth issue (p.74 forward in the book) of portraying the extent to which the pressure on Riel is building. Father Ritchot fails to get the assurance of an amnesty, Gabriel Dumont shows up prepared to start a guerrilla war against the incoming Canadian army, Riel reads Dumont the letter from Colonel Wolseley assuring Riel that he's only coming to "afford equal protection to the lives and property of all races and of all creeds" ("<And you believe him?>" Dumont is a doubting Thomas after my own heart), Riel is elected to Canada's Parliament even as he's being hunted. And throughout, he's thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking. And then comes the chance meeting in the hospital with Bishop Ignace Bourget. An actual bishop! What a (literal) godsend for a good Catholic as lost and confused as Riel was. Bourget tells him that "God has given you a mission—you must persevere on the path that has been laid out for you." As you indicate in your notes, he didn't actually say this on the occasion of their meeting, but wrote it in a letter: "God who has, up until the present, directed you and assisted you will not abandon you in your most difficult of struggles, for He has given you a mission which you must accomplish step by step [and] with the Grace of God you must persevere on the path that has been laid out for you." On the face of it, pretty generalized advice which (in my view) could, fruitfully, be addressed to anyone. In our secular and cynical age and in atheistic ears, it would seem as vague and semi-meaningless as a daily horoscope. But you quote Riel biographer Stanley: "Riel never parted with this letter. He carried it with him every day, next to his heart, and he placed it at the head of his bed every night."

(--"AND WILL AFFORD EQUAL PROTECTION TO THE LIVES AND PROPERTY OF ALL RACES AND OF ALL CREEDS, STRICTEST ORDER AND DISCIPLINE WILL BE MAINTAINED AND PRIVATE PROPERTY WILL BE CAREFULLY RESPECTED.")

This part is going to interest me, I hope you, and maybe three or four people in the audience, so I'll try to condense it as much as possible, although—as I warned you "off-camera" what seems easily explainable when I arrive at it after a lengthy period of assessment (like Cerebus' Torah commentaries) proves more difficult when I try committing it to print for an audience of devout atheists.

It seems to me that that was YHWH speaking through Bourget—that Louis Riel and his Red River community had become one of YHWH's favourite "channels"—by a wide margin—and that he/she/it had come to the conclusion that Riel would make the ideal YHWHist Prophet of the New World. It's not hard to see why, since Riel, as an individual inhabited a number of pertinent borderlands—between pagan and Christian, Indian and white, French and English. He had as much loyalty to the United States as he did to Canada and oscillated between the two countries comfortably, as he oscillated comfortably between eastern and western Canada and urban and rural Canada. As the designation he/she/it would indicate, YHWH has, I believe, an in-built predilection for just such borderland existences, for those who straddle many fences reflecting, again, what I see as his/her/its' pivotal belief that good and evil are not clearly demarcated and that, therefore, individuals who fit more than one definition hold the key to the supremacy of the YHWHist viewpoint. Gay rights and same-sex marriage, it seems to me, are central YHWHist

interests because they exist (or appear to) on the borderlands between male and female, husband and wife. As you noted, Riel had already written his Massinahican (a Cree word meaning "book" or "Bible" interchangeably—another enticing borderland!) proposing "a confederacy of Indian and mixed-blood peoples who would fight for a country of their own". So, it seems to me that with Riel—as opposed to the indiscriminate ker-WHOMP that I and most of his/her/its' victims get from YHWH—I think he/she/it sincerely believed that Prophethood could be conferred by he/she/it in this new land and gave Riel the full Moshe treatment ("... the same spirit that appeared to Moses in the midst of clouds [sic] *of flame appeared to me in the same manner")*

[I should explain that I believe the voice in the "burning bush" fire being YHWH's element—was YHWH in Exodus *chapter 3. God calls to Moshe from the midst of the bush in verse 5 saying "Draw not nigh hither." YHWH, as I see it, then takes over for the balance of verses 5 through 10. Then Moshe—thinking that YHWH and God are the same being—addresses a question to God in verse 11, which allows God to answer him ("Certainly I will be with you...") in verses 11 through 22. God—Nice Guy that he is—doesn't blow the whistle on YHWH and instead uses the "I am that I am" evasion, subtly indicating that there are two "I am's" and that one of the "I am's"—YHWH—the "god" of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the one commissioning Moshe as a Prophet—while indicating to YHWH his/her/itself that this is fine by God. Which indication, I suspect, came as a complete shock to YHWH.]*

And perhaps he/she/it could in a sense, confer a kind of ersatz prophethood. As I've said before, I imagine no one but God has full knowledge of what the rules are governing the realm of spirit or Spirit. My own faith tells me that the Age of Prophets ended with the death of Muhammad in 632, but I suspect that YHWH was allowed to "anoint" a few pseudo-prophets in the aftermath (if only to prove to himself/herself/itself the difference between a real Prophet sanctioned by God and a pseudo-prophet not sanctioned by God). As I said earlier, I think this was God's motivation in engineering Schultz as a Riel-in-microcosm test: proof positive that Riel is Not a Prophet, while still leaving the choosing of Riel as a viable option for YHWH. It's this choice, in my view, that he/she/it ultimately makes.

I have an interesting letter from a Mr. Jim Keller coming up next issue (we're going to miss you around here, Chet) which cites a number of analogies between Islam and the Mormon faith, just as there are a number of points of intersection between Islam and Riel. Foremost among these is the fact that YHWH transports Riel to the "fourth heaven" to explain the nations of the world to him. The notion of there existing seven heavens—ascending one above the other—originated in Islam, in particular with Muhammad's Night Journey (for those interested, this reportedly took place almost immediately after the death of Muhammad's uncle, patron and protector, Abu Talib, and—three days later—the death of Muhammad's first wife, Khadija). The only canonical *reference to the Night Journey, however, is in the first verse of sura 17, entitled "The Night Journey"*

Glory be to Him who carried his servant by night from the Sacred Temple to the Temple that is more remote, whose precinct we have blessed, that we might show him of our signs! For he is the Hearer, the Seer.

In the legend *of the Night Journey, documented in the biographies of the Prophet, the angel Gabriel came to Muhammad as he slept and said, "God commands you to come before His Majesty. The door to the Seven Heavens is open and the angels are waiting for you." The Prophet traveled on the back of a beast called The Buraq or Borak (Lightning)(!) with the countenance of a woman, the body of a mare and the hooves and tail of a*

camel (elsewhere I found it described as having the head of a human, the torso of a horse, the gleaming tail of a peacock and white wings). To say that this doesn't sound like something God would have anything to do with and that it clearly epitomizes YHWH instead, understates my view dramatically. The earthly portion of the journey—from Mecca to Jerusalem, with stops at the tomb of Abraham in Hebron and the birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem—is called the Isra. In Jerusalem Muhammad visited a mosque where he met Abraham, Moshe and Jesus among other prophets and holy men and led them in prayer. There followed the Miraj (mirage?) the ascent through the seven heavens, reportedly commencing from Jacob's rock...

[Genesis 28:11—where they're mentioned in the plural. Scotland's legendary Stone of Scone—which, before it was returned to Scotland a few years back by royal decree, was housed within the seat of that throne at Westminster Abbey used, for centuries, for the investiture and anointing ceremony of all the Kings and Queens of England—is reputedly another of the rocks Jacob used at Luz for his pillows]

...which is, today, housed and spot-lit and barricaded by high wooden railings in the middle of the Dome of the Rock mosque in the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Night Journey, under the name of its two components, Isra and Miraj, is commemorated in the Muslim calendar on the 27th of Rajab (which, this year, fell on September 23rd).

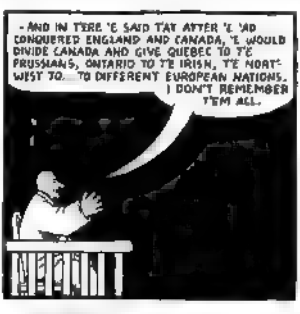
In the legends, in the first heaven Muhammad meets Adam and learns the secrets of time and duality (yes, duality—again, doesn't sound like something God would be associated with, to me) In the second heaven, he meets Noah, in the fifth, he meets Aaron, in the sixth, Moshe (who reportedly is saddened because he knew Muhammad would bring more souls to heaven than Moshe ever had), and in the seventh, Abraham. The distance from heaven to heaven is said to be 500 years and in the third heaven Muhammad met an angel "whose eyes were so far apart that it took 70,000 days to go from one eye to the other". In another heaven he meets an angel made half of snow and half of fire (!) In the third heaven, he met an angel with seventy faces, each with seventy tongues singing seventy exquisite melodies of praise for God. This form of multiplicity, again, doesn't exactly suggest God to me (and the mention of music—an abomination in Islam—in proximity to God is jarring in the extreme) but instead seems to echo the multi-dimensioned demons—like Asmoday from the Apocryphal book of Tobit*—that Alan Moore discussed in our* From Hell *dialogue and what I see as the YHWHist predilection for exponential multiplication in the hopes that in this multiplying of realities there might exist realms where good and evil aren't clearly demarcated or where they 'switch sides" or become interchangeable (I suspect that this is YHWH's underlying motive in his/her/its interest in borderlands of all kinds—that there exists some realm where YHWH and God switch sides or become interchangeable). Of course Muhammad was reputedly also taken on a tour of Hell according to the Night Journey legend. My own view is that the seven heavens and the seven circles of Hell are both constructs of YHWH (as I likewise believe is the case with the celestial throne described in John's Apocalypse with "seven lamps of fire (!) burning before the Throne, which are the seven Spirits of God"—I just can't picture God having a throne and I can't picture YHWH having anything else)("and the four beasts had each of them sixe wings about him, and they were full of eyes within, and they have no rest day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is and is to come" It seems to me that only a being who was completely uncertain of his/her/its divinity would require that level of positive reinforcement/cheerleading, 24/7).*

The only reference I found to the fourth heaven in Islamic legend is that it was guarded by an angel "whose size was the length of 500 days". From the Buraq (lightning) who was able to travel from Mecca to Jerusalem in a single night, the distance between heavens being measured in years (which anticipates the discovery of light-years by more than a thousand years), etc. etc this seems to me to be very much a light-based construct, exactly the sort of "heavens" that a being of light would manufacture to show off his/her/its "best side". And again, it seems to me, an entirely manufactured construct, that YHWH engineered in the hopes that by creating such an exponentially vast context for exponentially vast creatures some ambiguity between good and evil might be created. Real Ray Harryhausen Arabian Nights stuff. Very far from any reality of God, in my view. The fact that one of the individuals Muhammad meets in one of the heavens is Moshe's brother, Aaron—he of the Egyptian Whorehouse motif Tabernacle, Golden Calf and cattle-abattoir worship—well, personally, I can't think of a more unlikely candidate to find in any heaven I could think of. It is interesting that the third and fourth heavens are the only two without a YHWHist prophet or "prophet". What do you

want to bet that Riel's spirit inhabits the fourth one, now."

Would Louis Riel have known about the seven heavens of Islamic legend? It seems unlikely to me but I figured if anyone would know the answer, you might—or at least know where to look for it. I imagine that the Catholic priests of the Red River settlement--who you indicate in your notes were all deeply suspicious of and disliked Riel—would know enough about "Mohammedism"(as they would have called it) to get their hackles up at the mention of a "fourth heaven". Anyway, that was my principle interest the first time I asked you if you believed that Riel had actually experienced what he said he had experienced. My opinion is that he did, in the same sense that Muhammad experienced his Night Journey which was reportedly verified when he was able, the next morning, to describe the precincts of Jerusalem in great detail to the satisfaction of those who had been there even though he had never been there, himself, previously. But, it was greeted with the same sense of incredulity at the time that it is now, embarrassing the followers of the new faith, causing many of them to abandon Islam and opening the Prophet to new levels of abuse and ridicule. My personal suspicion was that this was a two-pronged effort on the part of YHWH to either destroy Islam in its infancy or to make it a YHWH-based faith. I'm sure God had every confidence that Islam would survive and flourish in spite of this Arabian Nights cul de-sac (and that the followers of the two great faiths intersecting, as a result, on the Temple Mount will learn to live in peace one day, while YHWH, I'm sure, has staked all of his/her/its chips on Red Armageddon between Jews and Muslims) (I bet God turns out to be right).

In your notes for issue nine, where you doubt the veracity of Charles Nolin's testimony about what he testified to be Riel's ultimate plan to divide up Canada and give Quebec to the Prussians, Ontario to the Irish, the Northwest to different European nations—the Jews would have a part, the Hungarians, the Bavarians—as you say you couldn't see Riel getting support for outside conquest. The people of the Red River settlement just wanted to defend their own homes, not conquer anyone else's. My own view is that Nolin was testifying about the only residue we have of whatever YHWH's plan was which had been imparted to Riel when he was in or "in" the fourth heaven and having the nations of the world explained to him. I suspect the missing part of the equation was that Riel never seriously considered declaring the Red River settlement a separate nation—in the process, I suspect, letting down YHWH big time—as you yourself dismissed the possibility earlier. As I say, given how promising Riel's Cree book/Bible would have seemed (YHWH-wise), I'll bet this was quite the body blow to he/she/it. Whatever it was YHWH had intended for his/her/its Prophet of the New World—and I suspect that the Red River settlement was, in YHWH's planning, modeled on Medina, the small Arabian city from which Muhammad ultimately conquered all the Arab lands—I think YHWH's plan foundered on this exact "fumble" on Riel's part. The fact that Riel keeps insisting that the Canadian government owes him something—and that he petitions Macdonald directly for thousands of dollars as payment for Riel having supervised the settlement—certainly undermines any credibility that he would have as an independent agent of an independent community. It would be as if President Ulysses S. Grant had petitioned the Canadian government for redress for governing the United States. Do you see what I mean? You're either the leader of a separate nation or you're a functionary of a pre-existent nation. The latter was Riel's free will choice—repeatedly! I find it fascinating to imagine what sort of "wiggle room" it would've allowed YHWH if Riel had avoided standing for election to the Canadian Parliament, if his free will decision had been to not officially register as a sitting member


- AND IN TERE 'E SAID TAT AFTER 'E 'AD CONQUERED ENGLAND AND CANADA, 'E WOULD DIVIDE CANADA AND GIVE QUEBEC TO TE PRUSSIANS, ONTARIO TO TE IRISH, TE NORT-WEST TO... TO DIFFERENT EUROPEAN NATIONS.
I DON'T REMEMBER TEM ALL.

(this was the first of your own "little ker-whomps" from YHWH, in my view—when you showed Riel, on page 102-103, choosing not to enter the Parliament buildings rather than, as you admit in your notes, "Riel did *enter one of the parliament buildings without being recognized and walked into the chief clerk's office to register as a Member of Parliament. The clerk didn't realize who he was signing in until he saw the signature. He ran to inform the Minister of Justice, but Riel was already quickly retreating from the building." I imagine it was YHWH's most fervent and heartfelt desire that the incident might have transpired the way you* drew *it, since it could create at least a semblance of ambiguity about whether Riel ever officially "signed on" as a Canadian citizen in any official capacity and therefore would make his trial for treason against his country unfounded. However, he* did *register officially, so, inescapably, he acknowledged that the Canadian government had sovereignty over him)*

.to not stand for election again and if he had not repeatedly demanded compensation for supervising the Red River settlement—if Riel, in short, had followed what I imagine were his YHWHist marching orders. make the Red River settlement into a separate nation and let YHWH work her international mischief from that base of operations...Alas, such was not to be.

But, boy, you can't say that Riel didn't get into the, ahem, "spirit" of the thing—declaring that the Church is corrupt and announcing he was setting up a New Church. Declaring that the Pope no longer had authority over the Red River settlement and that Bishop Bourget will be the new Pope. He obviously got ker-WHOMPED but good! It doesn't occur to him for a moment that a Catholic bishop might have a few problems with being declared the new Pope by a schoolmaster in the Canadian hinterlands. Makes about as much sense as Jackie Onassis inheriting the presidency. That is, perfect sense after you've been ker-WHOMPED by YHWH

Your notes on Bishop Bourget being an ultramontane—a designation I'd never come across before—were helpful. That they believed in "papal authority over state authority and desired the reunion of church and state." This seems YHWHist in its nature both as a desire for blurring of borderlands and distinctions and with the preeminence of the Bishop of Rome on earth (founded upon a single passage in Matthew, *attributed to the YHWHist—in my view—Synoptic Jesus). Along these same lines*

In your notes for page 111, you mention that "[f]or unknown reasons, Riel was transferred from L'Hospice de St. Jean de Dieu (that is, the Hospital of St. John of God, near Montreal) *to the* St. Michel-Archange (St. Michael Archangel) *asylum at Beauport (near Quebec City). I suspect that the "reason" was that this was the point where Riel was officially transferred from God's jurisdiction (John being, from what I can see, the Elohist gospel) to YHWH's jurisdiction. St. Michael (from the Hebrew* mik-a-el, *literally "who is like God") (nyuck nyuck nyuck)—or the Archangel Michael or Prince Michael, the purported guardian archangel of the Jews (with friends like Michael, who needs enemies?), as he is variously known—makes several appearances in the Bible. In the extra-canonical book of* Daniel (12:1, 10:13, 21—*extra-canonical to the Jews, anyway, where he is, I think, properly relegated to the Hagiographa or Writings. The govim inexplicably promoted him to the Prophets along with Ruth and Esther) and the Apocryphal book of* 1 Enoch *(20.5, 89.76). That is, he's only mentioned in those books which the rabbinates of the Diaspora already suspected of having a Babylonian "taint" (it is reasonably certain, as an example, that the Book of Esther is a re-written Babylonian myth). The Saint/Archangel/Prince's only* canonical *appearances are in John's* Revelation *or* Apocalypse *in the Christian Bible (12.7) where he wars against the Red Dragon (which predates the Red Dragon's appearance in* Bone *by a couple of thousand years) and in the Koran Sura "*The Cow*" (2.92)*

The scene between the Prophet of the New World and Gabriel Dumont in issue six is great as a contrast between the ker-WHOMPED and the completely UN-ker-WHOMPED ("<God doesn't want us to fight guerilla-style—what does God want us to do?>"). Even though Dumont knows better, knows that Riel's strategy guarantees their destruction, he defers to him. That be a righteous ker-WHOMPing all right when it overpowers straight thinkers in your vicinity to the extent of jeopardizing their own lives!

You know, I read your graphic novel all the way through several times and I still missed the significance of Riel's praying at Batoche during the Battle at Tourond's Coulee until my latest reading. I suspect YHWH might have compelled you to throw a little more snow over the panels on page 7 (and it's a beautifully-drawn scene with the finely-woven cross-hatching and blobs of snow) in the interest of covering up what I would guess was a very self-revealing piece of imagery. (You even seem perplexed at your own choice to use that much snow, pointing out that the Metis and the

Indians had set fire to the grass at the Coulee, so it couldn't have been snowing that heavily on the 24th. Looks to me like this was your second little ker-whomp, Chet) As you say in your notes, Riel held his arms up in the shape of a cross" And you further quote from Maggie Siggins book (p 399) "When his strength had given out the Métisses [female Métis] *had taken turns holding [Riel's arms] up." The analysis is accurate as far as it goes, but predates Jesus' cross by more than a thousand years It's actually an invocation of the first military conflict undertaken by the Hebrew people under Moshe, as documented in* Exodus *17:8-16, (itself an invocation of the first military conflict participated in by Abraham against the country of the Amalekites in Genesis 14.7).*

Then came Amalek, & fought with Israel in Rephidim.

And Moses said vnto Ioshua, Choose vs out men, and goe out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rodde of God in mine hand.

So Ioshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron and Hur went vp to the top of the hill

And it came to passe when Moses held vp his hand, that Israel preuailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek preuailed

But Moses hands were heauie, and they tooke a stone, and put it vnder him, and he sate thereon and Aaron and Hur stayed vp his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side, and his handes were steady vntill the going downe of the Sunne.

And Ioshua discomfited Amalek, and his people, with the edge of the sword.

And the YHWH said vnto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a booke, and rehearse it in the eares of Ioshua: for I will vtterly put out the remembrances of Amalek from vnder heauen.

And Moses built an Altar, and called the name of it IEHOVAH Nissi. *[The YHWH, my Banner]*

For, he said, the YHWH hath sworn the hand vpon the throne of the YHWH warre with Amalek from generation to generation.

This definitely prefigures the cross. And the stone Moshe sits on, it seems to me, prefigures Peter (as, much later, the crowning of England's sovereign upon the Stone of Scone was intended to resonate with this same...image? Living metaphor?—the rocks Jacob used for his pillows were, for all practical purposes, the first Judeo-Christian "church"). Of primary significance in the story, in my view, is that it is Aaron and Hur who "stayed up" Moshe's hands The same Aaron and Hur—or, at least, Hur's grandson—who were responsible for changing Judaism from a Prophet-centred faith to an Egyptian-Whorehouse-motif-Tabernacle-centered, Golden Calf, cattle abattoir-centred faith. That is (and this is as close as I can get to guessing at the spirit world Rule, rule or "rule" underpinning both circumstances) the ones who hold up the hands of the central figure become the heads of his church. When Joshua gets his turn generations later—as the Synoptic Jesus—to occupy the centermost role previously occupied by Moshe, there would naturally have been great curiosity about who would get to hold up his hands. The answer, of course, was no one. He was nailed to the cross and two spikes held up his hands "until the going down of the sun"

What's interesting here in the story of Louis Riel is that he has two <u>women</u> *holding up his hands—even though there are still plenty of men in the settlement. I imagine this was a specific instruction from YHWH Now, the story begins to make a little more sense (although in a very vague way; again, I can only guess at the underpinning of the "staying up" of the central figure's hands and why YHWH would attempt to influence you to obscure the image with snow). YHWH has declared Riel to be his/her/its Prophet of the New World and by having the women holding up his hands, he/she/it, it seems to me, has guaranteed*

that women, in general, will become the heads of the New World church. I would imagine that there is something fundamentally wrong in the spirit world, I mean—with this that either embarrasses YHWH to have attention called to it or which undermines YHWH because she was "pulling a fast one" with it.

(maybe citing what I see as an analogous modern-day situation will help. In Cecille B. DeMille's The Ten Commandments*—the Charlton Heston version—the character who makes the Golden Calf in Moses' absence isn't his brother Aaron, as in the Torah, but Dathan, a completely separate character who rebelled against Moses with his brother Abiram and a Levite, Korah* (Numbers 16.1-35)*. This, it seems to me, was another little ker-whomp. YHWH can't change the Torah—much as he/she/it would like to—but she can avoid the embarrassment of having the founder of the Egyptian-Whorehouse-motif Tabernacle, Golden Calf and cattle-abattoir-worship and chief resident of his/her/its fifth heaven played as a villain by (YHWH forbid!) Edward G. Robinson in a movie. Which, it seems to me, he/she/it avoided with a little ker-whomp on Mr. DeMille and/or his screenwriter.)*

If I understood the specific spirit world rules in play I imagine it would explain the exponentially greater level of feminism in Canada than elsewhere and explain the onset of feminism itself in 1970, 85 years after 1885. Why 85? What is the significance of two 85's? Beats hell out of me, but the symmetry is interesting, don't you think? It also helps explain the otherwise inexplicable why Riel becomes completely passive at this point, refusing to let Dumont and the others chase the Canadian troops or ambush them. Basically, it seems to me that what YHWH required—given that Riel bungled several key points in his intended prophethood—was Riel's martyrdom. What YHWH hoped to do, in my view, was to salvage his/her/its "fourth heaven prophet" by imitating what God did with Jesus. By having the Romans execute Jesus—unjustly—Jesus' spirit "entered" into the Roman Empire, "traveling" all the way to Rome and, ultimately, after five centuries, collapsing the Roman Empire from within and replacing it with his own "rock". I have no idea what the rules of the Spirit world are, but this seems to be one of them—and my gut instinct tells me that it came as a complete surprise to YHWH and impressed the hell out of he/she/it that Jesus' crucifixion ultimately led to the collapse of his/her/its pagan crown jewel (all roads lead to Rome). As I see it, if YHWH could get the Canadian troops to arrest Riel and the Canadian government to execute Riel, he/she/it suspected that the Indian, French and two female spirits united in Riel at Batoche would, in a comparable fashion to what God accomplished with Jesus' martyrdom against Rome—travel to, inhabit and, ultimately, collapse the Canadian government from within in the same way. Of course, I also think YHWH was originally a good deal more ambitious than this. I think she wanted Riel's spirit to go all the way to London (Canadian Head Office, so to speak) and collapse the British crown (whose possessor is one of God's designated "anointed on earth"). Turnabout is fair play. If the spirit of Jesus could collapse a pagan empire, why couldn't the spirit of a half-pagan—a Metis—collapse the empire headed by one of God's anointed? It seems to me that had Riel maintained the Red River settlement's status as an independent nation—over which he was already the sole acknowledged leader—there would have been no impediment to his spirit (after his martyrdom) traveling to London and collapsing the British crown. But, I suspect, by repeatedly insisting that he should be paid by the Canadian government and by running for election to Parliament, registering as a Member of Parliament and standing for election again, Riel guaranteed that the road he was traveling on YHWH's behalf led only as far as Ottawa. As in the case of Riel's intransigence against Schultz and Schultz's Canadian followers, it was Riel himself who would prove to be his own worst enemy as YHWH's putative Prophet of the New World.

But within those admittedly narrow constraints, Riel's martyrdom was effective, amazingly so in a very few years, collapsing John A. Macdonald's Conservative Party and making the Liberal Party virtually the perennial custodians of the only one-party state among the great democracies. The Liberal party which—as documented by Peter C. Newman in his article, "The two rules of Liberal longevity"—has only two foundational rules for its leadership (which aren't so much rules in any conventional sense as they are pagan tribal shibboleths). First, that—beginning within two years of Riel's execution—they adopted the rule of alternating between French and English leaders—from Laurier to King, to St. Laurent, to Pearson, to Trudeau, to Turner, to Chretien, to Martin. "This," as Mr. Newman correctly asserts, "is not negotiable." It's also not wholly democratic (to say the least)—a kind of 19th century "affirmative action" which imposes arbitrary impediments to genuine

fairness in the interest of creating illusory fairness.

"The second rule, which is more obscure, but equally strict, is that no matter which party veteran most clearly deserves a shot at the top spot, the Liberals always choose an 'outsider' That's political sorcery of the highest order."

I suspect Mr. Newman is more accurate than he knows in describing this as sorcery (if, as I suspect, YHWH was the motivating force behind it)—as he was equally accurate in the same article describing Liberalism as "Canada's state religion." And it's hard for me not to picture the spirit of Louis Riel when Newman describes Pierre Trudeau's dramatic ascent to the leadership in 1968 as that of "a rabble-rouser who a few short years earlier had been attacking the party for its nuclear-friendly defence policies." And bearing in mind the YHWHist predilection for borderlands and imagery, it's interesting that Newman also notes

Liberals react with an almost gravitational pull to compromise, conciliation and the notion that the political ideal is to do as little as possible, but as much as necessary ... true Grits *[Liberals]* treat the voters' ballots as a commodity, to be bought and sold, a mathematical rubric that isn't valid past Kenora, because west of the Ontario border, few votes are required to bolster the party's winning margins in Ontario and Quebec.

epitomizing the French and English duality, which was Riel's seminal distinction in the Red River settlement and essentially restricting Canada's over-arching reality to the borderland between French and English, Ontario and Quebec. And if the spirit of Louis Riel, Martyr, has taken possession of the Liberal party and through the Liberal party, this country, could YHWH's sentiments have found a more eloquent spokesman than Jack Pickersgill, a senior minister in the Pearson government, quoted by Newman from a personal interview?: "It is not merely for the well-being of Canadians, but for the good of mankind in general *(emphasis mine) that the present Liberal government should remain in office." And could Riel have more succinctly expressed the sentiment, "Conservative governments are like the mumps. Something you have to endure once in your lifetime, but when it's over, you don't want it again."*

And if there exists a country on the face of the earth that is more extravagant in just shoveling money in the direction of its aboriginal peoples (billions and billions and billions of largely unaccounted-for dollars through the Department of Indian Affairs) I sure don't know which it would be. Likewise with the blight of feminism which has taken root in Canada to a nearly unimaginable degree—as I documented in the final installment of "Why Canada Slept"

Sorry, Chet. Typing quotes out of a newspaper article I slipped into "essay mode" at the end there. Anyway, this is what it's like tracking "the finger of God" through these stories. I mean, at first, it was just an interesting meeting place of Islam and Christianity (Hey! Wait 'til I tell Chet!). But, the further I extrapolate backwards or forwards from one of these little quirks, the more interesting it gets—answering large questions which then pose larger questions. It's easy to forget that this isn't just literary criticism (at least I don't think it is). "Compare and contrast Louis Riel's experience in the fourth heaven with those of Muhammad on his Night Journey."

Large question: are we permanently, inescapably locked into this dichotomous Louis Riel/Martyr reality? Every new Prime Minister, Conservative or Liberal, vows to overhaul the Indian Affairs Department and every one of them just ends up installing bigger, faster money shovels. Even for an ultra-liberal democracy, there's something downright spooky there. Billions and billions and billions of largely unaccounted-for dollars flying out the window and the most anyone in this country can manage is to go, "Hm." And how much does this "curse" affect the United States? After all, Riel adopted American citizenship in 1883 and he was—if his experience on the hilltop near Washington actually took place (and I, for one, believe it did)—designated not the Prophet of Canada, *but the Prophet of* the New World, *an altogether larger kettle of fish presumably including our neighbours to the south.*

Is it that my extended celibacy has placed me outside of the ensnaring influence of the curse—immune to the hallucinatory reality of the Aaron-and-Hur-modeled Métisses who supported Riel's Moshe-modeled arms that long-ago April 24? I have to admit that that doesn't seem outside of the realm of likelihood to me. I wanted to do a parody of what writing about feminism so extensively looks like from this side of the keyboard: "Two and two equals four. That is to say that two and two do not equal five or six nor, in my opinion, any other integer which would not be what most of us would agree to be what is conventionally agreed to be four (IV). Put another way: one plus one equal two. In repeating this process and considering the resultant amounts in tandem

(while acknowledging that none of you see it this way) it does appear that the two results (both of which can be most accurately described as "two's") when joined, inevitably (at least as I see it) equal four (or, if you prefer, any whole number which exists between the numbers three and five)."

Okay. I'm done. Time for the snap fasteners in your jaw-line to undo themselves one at a time No rush. I'll be right here

Several possibilities had occurred to me regarding the encounter or encounters that Riel claimed to have had with the spirit of God.

1) The spirit lied to Riel. 2) Riel misunderstood the spirit (in the same manner that he chose to misunderstand Bishop Bourget, but with the added problem of the discombobulating nature of the mystical experience—the ker-WHOMP) 3) Riel lied and invented the story. 4) Riel was mentally ill and there was no "external reality" to his hallucination(s).

That last one is, given my biases against materialism in general and psychiatry in particular, the one I consider the least likely, but the materialistic-model is still in my head even if I generally ignore it. I see 3 as more likely than 4, but I think Riel's confused mental state in early 1876 was consistent with the sort of mystical experience that he reported having, so I think he was probably telling the truth 1 and 2 I see as being about equally possible.

I was aware that there were other possibilities that weren't occurring to me, and your last fax provides me with one: that the spirit was mostly sincere and didn't lie (or didn't lie much) and believed that it could confer prophethood on Riel, but that the spirit wasn't able to control events in the way that Riel and the spirit expected it would be able to. A possibility that I'd rate up alongside 1 and 2. Of course, since, as I said earlier, I don't accept your God and YHWH story as "the truth," I see the details as they relate to your God and YHWH story as interesting and fun-to-read (for me, anyway) but rating only a little higher than possibility 4. I don't have a religious counter-story to oppose yours and to place Riel's mystical experiences into in a way that explains them, but I still have a few comments.

The tenet that there are seven heavens predates Islam. It's an ancient pagan belief. But Riel wouldn't have had to have been familiar with paganism or Islam to have come across the idea of there being multiple heavens—all he had to do was read *II Corinthians* 12.2 where Paul mentions being taken up to "the third heaven."

Swedenborg talks of there being three main heavens, but I seem to remember a passage in one of his books where he wrote about intermediate heavens. I spent a lot of time, after getting your fax, searching for that passage so that I could see what number of the main heavens and the intermediate heavens added up to (seven?) but I couldn't find it.

Regarding the first of my "little ker-WHOMPS": Yes, Riel registered as a Member of Parliament on March 26, 1874, but in 1878 he moved to the States and in 1883 he became a US citizen. I would think that Canada's claim of sovereignty over him would have ceased at that point.

Not too long before I drew the scene of Riel's arms being held up in the shape of a cross, I saw the relatively recent CBC TV production, *Canada, A People's History*. In that version of the scene, the actor playing Riel crossed his arms in front of himself to form a cross (in the way that you sometimes see characters do in vampire movies). Up to that point, I had just assumed that the cross had been formed by Riel holding his arms out from his sides. That's the way I'd mentally envisaged the scene when I first read the Siggins biography, and the two visual versions that I'd seen since—the CBC TV movie from the 70s and the French comic-book bio by Zoran and Toufik—had both shown the scene in the same way. So, seeing *A People's History* made me unsure how to depict the scene: arms outstretched at the sides or crossed in front? The CBC had really played up how historically accurate *A People's History* was. I thought that maybe the producers of that series had some information I didn't have that indicated just how Riel held up his arms. In the end, I decided to go with the arms-up-from-the-sides because it would have been difficult to clearly depict the crossed arms. If Riel had crossed his arms, the Métis women holding his arms, presumably, would have stood in front of Riel. I *could* have arranged the figures

in such a way that the crossed arms would have been visible, but it still would have been a difficult-to-read image.

You would have really thought I'd been ker-WHOMPED if I'd drawn the women in front of Riel. In fact, if I'd had Riel crossing his arms, I probably would have drawn only one woman holding up his arms. But then, if I'd done that, you'd have been even less likely to see the possible Moses connection.

You'll probably find it interesting that, even though the TV-movie and the Zoran and Toufik comic book show Riel holding up his arms in the I'm-being-crucified position, neither shows anyone—male or female—holding up his arms. I can't remember if *A People's History* shows anyone holding up Riel's arms or not. I'm almost tempted to rent it just to find out.

There may be some people who distrust your interpretations and are unfamiliar with Canadian history and who are therefore suspicious of your claim that Riel's execution was responsible for the weakening of Canada's Conservative Party and the domination of Canadian politics since then by the Liberal Party. So let me assure yours readers that I agree with this view and so do many respectable historians. The Liberal Wilfred Laurier certainly did exploit French resentment over Riel's death in the 1896 election, which resulted in Laurier becoming prime minister. Perhaps I should have mentioned this at the end of my notes to make it clear why Riel's story is still important and how it connects to today's political scene in Canada.

It should be pointed out, though, that Riel himself was a conservative and was opposed to 19th century liberalism. And he would have been horrified to find out what the liberalism of his day would evolve into.

And he wouldn't be the first conservative to be misappropriated by the other team.

I can't believe you actually read all that, let alone answered it.

Well, this business with Riel's arms just gets more and more interesting, doesn't it? One of the major reasons I got rid of my television was that I started seeing it as a light-based YHWH conduit, the fatuous content being only a minor element. I believe he/she/it issues society-wide ker-whomps through television on a regular basis (which, not to alarm anyone, seem to be coming closer and closer together like labour pains). The National Post, *the day after a generalized ker-whomp, is just riddled with really obvious typos, complete lapses of common sense and an exponential increase in female-centered "news" items. The next day, everything's back to normal (relatively speaking). I note with interest that* A People's History *aired just before you were getting ready to draw that sequence, just in time to sow some radical doubt about what you had pictured in reading the Siggins book. Quite aside from how much more difficult it would be to draw, I think it would have been completely obscure to any eyewitnesses. I suspect that most devout Christians (as most of them would have been) would have recognized the Moshe imagery from* Exodus*—particularly with a pitched battle going on nearby. Had Riel crossed his arms in front of him and had Métisses (plural) supported his arms, it would be hard to picture anyone recognizing what Riel was doing (say! What is Louis doing wit' dose chicks over dere? Save some for us, Louis!).*

Which leads to the question, where did the documentation of the incident come from? Given that Maggie Siggins (a woman, I hasten to point out) seems to be the only one who has two women supporting Riel's arms, where did she get the story from? Or did she get a little ker-whomp herself? What do you want to bet that she knows she read it somewhere, but darned if she can find the reference in any of her notes? (Objection, your honour, the question is highly speculative and calls for the drawing of a conclusion on the part of the witness.) (Sustained.)

I do think that YHWH has taken some pains to try to obscure the image. I have no idea what the motivation might be, but I suspect he/she/it is really, really, really not happy about us going on at this great length about it. Which makes all this typing just that much more worthwhile!

I'm not sure what international law was like in the 1880s, but I'm reasonably certain that Riel's registration as a Member of Parliament and his solicitation of "back pay" from the Government of Canada for his services as the supervisor of the Red River settlement would constitute an acknowledgment of Canadian citizenship, thus making him subject to Crown prosecution. Even if he renounced his Canadian citizenship in becoming a US citizen, I doubt that would give him immunity from prosecution (I don't know how far back extradition treaties between our two countries go but I would imagine they were in place by 1883) and I think his returning to Canadian soil to lead a rebellion would make his American citizenship a moot point. I suspect the American State Department would have to have intervened on Riel's behalf and it's hard to picture them doing that for someone who keeps "going

home" to cause trouble. There's no domestic "plus" to counter the diplomatic "minus" involved in an intervention.

Technically, nothing predates Islam—the submission to the will of God is universal except in vast numbers of human beings—as opposed to the revelation *of Islam as a religion, but I know what you mean.*

Your reference to II Corinthians *is interesting.*

I knew a man in Christ aboue fourteene yeeres agoe, whether in the body, I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth: such a one, caught vp to the third heauen.

And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth.)

How that he was caught vp into Paradise and heard vnspeakeable wordes, which is it not [lawfull/possible] for a man to utter.

Of such will I glory, yet of my selfe I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

Paul's syntax always makes my head ache. Why does he put the "such a one, caught up to the third heaven" at the end of the passage? The way it reads, Paul knew "a man in Christ" but Paul isn't sure if he knew the guy in his body or out of his body. Whose body? The guy's? Or Paul's? Paul wasn't sure that the guy was in his body when Paul knew him. Or Paul wasn't sure Paul was in his own body when he knew the guy. Or is the body Christ's? Paul didn't know if the guy was in the Body of Christ (i.e. a good church goer) or not in the Body of Christ (i.e. a pagan) when he knew him. And then he just repeats *the confusing part, instead of* clarifying *the confusion he created. He does that a lot. "Hmm. This part is a little confusing. Better write it down again."*

But, giving Paul the benefit of the doubt, I think what he's saying is the same thing we're saying about Riel: the self-evident truth is that we don't know what Riel experienced, any more than Paul knows what the man he knew actually experienced. The nature of spirit in a human being is that it is housed in such a way that no other human being can be aware of another's spirit. My awareness is my awareness. Your awareness is your awareness. We have no way of determining if those two awarenesses are linked in any way to each other or to other awarenesses, whether they are comparable in any way or even that they exist in any conventional—and certainly any demonstrable—*meaning of the term "exist". It seems to me that this cuts to the heart of the central flaw in calling psychiatry a science, because actual awareness is structurally inaccessible, it is beyond the boundaries of actual science. My own thesis is that most of our own awareness is inaccessible even to ourselves. The self-awareness I think of as "me" is like the visible part of an iceberg. The vast majority of it is hidden—from me, but not from God. Submitting to the will of God allows the vast majority of my awareness that is otherwise inaccessible to me to be put to good use even as I continue to be completely unaware, consciously, of the process taking place. Obviously, parts of yourself of which even you aren't aware are the most private parts of you imaginable—which is why, I think, God needs to have you make the free-will choice to submit to His will and to reinforce that decision consciously and repeatedly through prayer, because, otherwise He would be trespassing in a major—and completely unconscionable—way.*

Uh-oh.

I got your fax at 11 p.m. and had to be out of my apartm—fashionable condo at 6 to catch my flight to Calgary. Reading the fax, I thought, "Siggins wasn't the only author who mentioned the Métisses holding up Riel's arms." I went and found Flanagan's *Louis "David" Riel* and flipped to the pages dealing with the Fish Creek battle.

"He stood and prayed with his arms extended in the form of a cross. Two strong men helped him keep his weary arms up, as Moses had been helped during the battle with the Amalekites."

Uh-oh.

I grabbed my copy of George Stanley's *Louis Riel.*

"Raising his arms in the form of a cross, and turning his face upwards, he began to pray. When his arms became weary, two métis stepped forward and held them."

I checked the end-notes—Flanagan cites Stanley as his source, so it looks like Flanagan added the adjective "strong" Stanley cites the memoir of someone named Garnot, so that looks like the primary source. Siggins cites...no one. Only when I was on the bus to the airport, hours later, did it occur to me—too late—to check Siggins bibliography to see if she listed Garnot. (I'd photocopied what I thought were the relevant pages to bring with me on the trip so I wouldn't have to carry a stack of books.)

Here's what I think happened—I'm guessing

that Garnot describes Riel praying with the women (all the books I've read specifically make note of Riel praying with the women). Then Garnot probably relates how Riel lifted his arms and how the Métis held up his arms when he got tired. The word "Métis" can refer to both men and women. Flanagan—spotting the Moses connection—assumed the Métis arm-holders were men. Siggins, noting that the Métis who were around Riel were described by Garnot as being female, assumed that *they* held up his arms.

Perhaps I noticed the conflict between the Flanagan and Siggins interpretations when I wrote my script and made a choice to draw the Siggins version, intending to note the other possibility in my end-notes, and then completely forgot about the matter. Or perhaps when I read the Flanagan book, my eyes saw "men" but my mind read "women," since I already knew from reading the Siggins book first that that's what was "supposed" to be on the page. (I'd read the Siggins book three times before reading the Flanagan one.)

I think Paul was referring to himself in the third-person in that *2 Corinthians* passage and was specifically discussing his experience on the road to Damascus. I can't remember why I think that (perhaps he refers to "unspeakable words" when he talks about the road to Damascus in his writings?). And I don't have a Bible with me here in Banff to double-check that.

Oops: just checked—there is a Gideon's Bible in my hotel room. Now I need a concordance.

As I say, I have real problems with Paul's commentaries (and I do consider them commentaries, not scripture). Re-reading the notes on II Corinthians*—as has been my experience in reading the notes in my* New Bible Dictionary *on all his other epistles—has only reinforced that for me. Christians—for some reason which is inexplicable to me—seem compelled to raise Saul of Tarsus up to the level of a prophet and his writings to truth incarnate. Obviously, someone who experienced his conversion, as Saul/Paul reportedly did, in a blinding flash of light, I have no trouble, personally, picturing which team he's on. The fact that so much of his writing can be read as being simultaneously pro* and *con on any given subject (his idiosyncratic syntax again) and that much of his writing is, to me, simple gibberish (however high-minded and stirring on its surface) makes him, in my eyes, a great YHWHist functionary, but very little besides. Paul literally has me on the edge of my seat, intellectually, time and time again, anticipating some grand, over-arching insight*

That never comes

I consider it a hallmark of what I see as Paul's singular nature that his Epistle to the Romans *and* Epistle to the Hebrews *are among my favourite books of the Bible to read aloud, even though virtually every idea expressed in them, in my experience, turns out to be either double-talk or an emotion-based "road to nowhere" relative to the rules governing sequential thought—which is what I think they were intended to be. Like the ambiguity of the Synoptic Jesus, I think Paul's epistles were and are a litmus test of inherent goodness, since they can be read either as a) self-exaltation to deistic and near-deistic levels or as b) genuine self-abasement and humility. The latter view has definitely prevailed, universally, in the Christian church (both as the Christian perception of inherent Christ-nature and as the perception of Paul as the seminal Christian commentator) so, to me, God has won his point. I would assume that YHWH was betting that the Synoptic Jesus (as interpreted by Paul) would have the entire Christian world—after the manner of YHWH him/her/itself—exalting themselves as deities and near-deities inside of a few generations.*

The fact that Acts *9 (which documents the road to Damascus conversion) makes no reference to a third heaven, I think, might undermine your argument. On the other hand, it is certainly possible that Saul/Paul was told more than "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me?" and "I am Iesus whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kicke against the prickes." (a reference, I believe, to YHWH's "thorns and thistles" from* Genesis *3.18) and "Arise, and goe into the citie, and it shall be told thee what thou must doe" and, possibly, Paul was also told not to reveal anything more than those three statements even as the secrets of the third heaven were revealed to him. He could very well be Louis Riel's downstairs neighbour in the heavenly hierarchy even as we speak.*

As to your "uh-ohs," I will point out that this is one of the major problems I have with allowing (what I see as) the intellectual perversion of feminism into fields of genuine study and scholarship. Women and feminists are far, far more Chauvinistic than men are (that is, predisposed to look for and enlarge their team's role in any given text even—and I daresay—especially where the evidence doesn't warrant it, just as Chauvin was blindly prejudiced in favour of all things French) and are also wilfully blind to exactly that trait of inherent prejudice in

themselves. As you say, you read "men" but your mind thinks "women" - in my view, because you—and Maggie Siggins and feminists generally—want so badly for women to be infinitely more important than they are. Warning flags go up when I hear about how women are bringing a new feminine perspective to Biblical scholarship. Strikes me as comparable to saying that Adolf Hitler brought a new Germanic understanding to the study of Judaism. Feminism and the female viewpoint, in my view, should be restricted to Women's Studies, gossip, back-biting and psychiatry (and all other pseudo-sciences) where it belongs

As I say, I have no idea about the nature of the realm of spirit or Spirit, but it does seem to me that there is something "afoot" in Maggie Siggins' leap of feminist faith, your unquestioning adoption of it (to the extent that you don't even know if you recognized it as an exceptional view or, in fact, know if you intended to note that there existed a consensus view diametrically opposed to it—all earmarks, I hope you would agree, of a previously unrecognized ker-whomp), and the fact that certain...other worldly?...efforts appear to have been made to obscure your pictorial misapprehension. The fact that I don't understand the underlying motives and forces at work compels me to be more (rather than less) wary of these feminist peculiarities when and where they appear.

Okay, I'm back in Toronto with all my books to refer to.

I looked up *2 Corinthians* 12:2 in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, and whoever wrote the *2 Corinthians* commentary in that book agrees with me that Paul was talking about himself being in the third heaven but disagrees that Paul was talking about the road-to-Damascus experience.

With various translations of the Bible before me, I can see why I thought that Paul was probably talking about himself 12:2 - in 12:1 he says he's about to boast about his own mystical experiences. That that's what Paul is saying *isn't* clear in the King James version. I think a lot of the difficulty you have in understanding Paul comes from trying to wrestle with the archaic phrasing of the King James Bible. Maybe you should try some more recent translations. Not that those translations completely clear things up—there's enough ambiguity in the passage that I'm not entirely certain that Paul was talking about himself.

I'm probably wrong about Paul visiting the third heaven during his road-to-Damascus experience, but I seem to remember connecting the third heaven visit to some other mystical experience described in Paul's writings. Maybe I'm remembering wrong—I haven't been able to track it down, not even with the help of a concordance.

You hope I'd agree that I'd been ker-whomped in regards to my handling of Riel's arms being held up. Not at all. I'll admit (shame-facedly) to carelessness, but that's all. Ms Maggie Siggins' guess that the Métis who held Riel's arms were female looks to me like a completely reasonable one, although I do think she should have noted in her text that she was guessing.

Spoken like a truly ker-whomped feminist.

From what little I've read of Paul's commentaries in New Easy To Read Scripture, all the latest apologists have managed to do is to transform his non sequiturs into different non sequiturs. It isn't the Jacobean prose, I don't think, it's the fact that most of his stuff is gibberish. Sufficiently incoherent that most of the time the verbiage obscures his own, as I see it, intended subtext (about which he was understandably nervous) which, it seems to me, was: Jesus was actually God and I, Paul, am actually Jesus. As I say, I think this had enormous appeal for YHWH who expected everyone to decide that Jesus was actually God, Paul was actually Jesus and everyone is actually Paul,

therefore everyone is actually God. YHWH "logic" at its finest. Much, I'm sure, to YHWH's chagrin, the entirety of Christendom has historically, managed to avoid drawing any specious analogies between ourselves and Jesus—apart from a few seriously loose screws like John Lennon, the self-confessed "born- again pagan." Talk about "her-whomped"

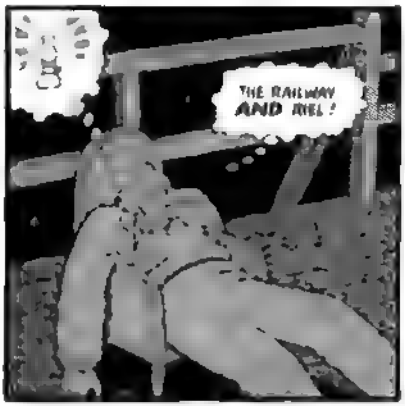
A few stray observations to "close out the show". I very much liked your portrayal of John A. Macdonald's epiphany on page 134 where his insight is marked by the omission of solid blacks and cross-hatching from the panel—literal brilliance (it even balanced out what I saw as excessiveness on your part in portraying our first prime minister's legendary tippling by having empty whisky bottles scattered on the floor. Sir John was, unquestionably, a tosspot, but I would imagine he was still drinking his spirits) (nyuck nyuck nyuck) (by the glass from a proper crystal decanter and not chug-a-lugging them straight out of the bottle!). What was particularly interesting to me is that when the cross-hatching returns to your work on the subsequent pages it does so with a vengeance! Multi-layered fine line hatching that could give Gerhard a run for his money. When I mentioned it to you at the time, there was a note of ambiguity in your reaction—you weren't happy, or part of you wasn't happy, with the new look and the decision-making that led you to incorporate it. How do you see the decision in retrospect? Was it just that you weren't looking forward to having to go back and "goose up" the cross-hatching in earlier pages to get a consistent look? Or was there a deeper ambiguity there that I'm missing?

My cross-hatching in *Louis Riel* was inspired by Harold Gray's shading technique and I think I fell short of what the master accomplished.

I'm glad you liked the way I handled Macdonald's epiphany. I'd originally drawn the scene in a different manner—placing it in Macdonald's home in Ottawa rather than in the Bull's Hotel in London—and had depicted an oil lamp as a thought balloon over Sir John's head as a 19th century substitute for a light bulb. I decided that that was too cutesy when I redrew the scene.

Just while I was in the neighbourhood of that part of the story, I noticed Riel's reference on page 137 to "the losses he suffered from being obliged to abandon his country for so long." My emphasis added. It seems to me that the cumulative evidence points to Riel believing himself to be a Canadian, whatever he might have thought of Canada and its government.

The quote comes from the local government official, David Macdowall, not Riel (see panel 137:4), but it could well be that in 1885 Riel still thought of Canada, or at least of the Canadian Prairies, as his country.



Regarding the matter of Canada's sovereignty over Riel in 1885, the following is from *The Trial of Louis Riel: Justice and Mercy Denied* by George R. D. Goulet (1999):

"Riel was charged with six counts of high treason. Three of the charges, relating separately to activities at Duck Lake, Fish Creek and Batoche, were based on the principal of law known as the doctrine of natural allegiance. The other three charges, while almost identical to the first three, were slightly varied to encompass the doctrine of local allegiance. Natural allegiance was the legal obedience which a subject owed to his or her sovereign at all times, and in all places, so long as the relation of subject and sovereign subsisted [. .] Local allegiance was the allegiance owed by an alien while he or she was resident or continued within the dominions and the protection of the English Crown. [..]

"British law had been that if one was born a British subject one died a British subject regardless of whether that person later became a naturalized citizen of another country.

"[..] To forestall potential antagonism by the American government to Riel, a United States citizen, being charged only as a British subject,

government officials prudently added the charges based on the doctrine of local allegiance [ ] It was fortunate that they did so since the doctrine of natural allegiance under the British law was wiped out by the Naturalization Act, 1870 of the United Kingdom *which came into force on May 12 1870 [ ] Section 6 of this act provided that a person ceased to be a British subject by voluntarily becoming a naturalized citizen of a foreign state. [...] In light of the foregoing, as well as the fact that no testimony whatsoever was adduced at Riel's trial proving that he was a British subject, the first three charges against Riel founded on natural allegiance, were invalid."* [Pp. 49-51]

You've retreated into nit-picking forensic debate, Chet. David Macdowall was enunciating Riel's viewpoint as it had been conveyed to him As to Goulet's argument, I don't buy it. Canada bought the territory Riel was living on. At that point, to escape Canada having jurisdiction over you, you leave or, by staying, you accept Canada's jurisdiction over you. Yes, certainly, Britain had ultimate jurisdiction but only in the sense that Canada was—and technically still is—one of Britain's dominions. Whether Britain would extend citizenship to individuals living on land purchased by the government of Canada that's an argument between Britain and Canada and completely irrelevant to the relationship between Canada and one of its citizens. It would certainly be convenient to be able to take out a foreign citizenship so as to bypass a charge of treason, but it seems ludicrous to me—commit a treasonous act and then become a naturalized citizen of another country so as to eliminate the basis of the charge of treason? Particularly when you are still living on the land where you chose to commit your treasonous acts? are continuing to commit treasonous acts? and are, simultaneously insisting that the government that owns that land compensate you for supervising it? after you have stood for election to that country's parliament and have registered as a member of that parliament?

"Just ignore all that I'm actually an American, now."

"Oh, sorry. Consider the treason charge a bad dream. Here's a cheque for supervising the Red River settlement and a letter extending the prime minister's sincerest apologies."

You can remain willfully ignorant of Riel's repeated demonstrated intent—*his* demonstrated intent *in accepting Canada's jurisdiction over him, both by remaining on Canadian land and by functioning within Canada's electoral and parliamentary context—(and willful ignorance does seem to be the universal consensus for everyone in this lunatic country except me) but that doesn't change the facts of the matter any more than sticking your fingers in your ears and going, "LALALALA! I'm NOT LISTENING" would in any way change the facts of the matter.*

Probably irrelevant to everyone except myself, but given that my own thesis is that Riel was chosen by YHWH to be his/her/its prophet of the new world, it's interesting (as I say, to me, anyway, that on page 145, Riel "breathes the holy spirit on his followers," since this was an act attributed only to the Johannine Jesus (John 20:22). I wonder if Riel was improvising at that point, essentially "acting out" scripture as it occurred to him to do so—and inadvertently giving YHWH a little slap in the face—or if there was an ongoing contention between God and YHWH through these events.

Meanwhile, back in the world all the rest of you inhabit

I can't let you go here without asking what your thinking was behind alternating the sound effects "PK" and "BLAM" for gunfire. I really liked the "PK" because it is so much closer to the actual sound a rifle makes, particularly in a wide-open space (a very versatile sound effect—you used it as well for the nailing of the "royal proclamation" to the fence. Very austere, very frontier-like, as I told you at the time). What's the story, Chet?

I used "PK" for gunfire in the distance and "BLAM" for gunfire that was closer to the "camera". I don't think I've ever heard real gunfire.

Well, good guessing then, Chet, because that's what it sounds like. The "PK", I mean. "BLAM" is Hollywood, "juicing up" the sound. I also found your story of how you arrived at your archetypal horse (something of a necessity with all the Métis and Canadian soldiers on horseback for pages and pages and pages) interesting. Our discussion started with me asking if Harold Gray had ever drawn a sequence in Little Orphan Annie *with horses that you could use for reference (in the same way that I ask myself "did Al Williamson or Mort Drucker ever draw hair that looked like Woody Allen's hair? And if so, where would I find it?"—the inevitable question of the acolyte of a specific artist's style. I always picture Raphael craning his neck to see if something similar to what he needed to paint was somewhere on the Sistine Chapel ceiling)*

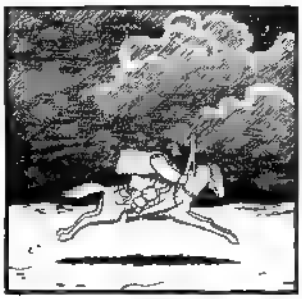
What story was that? I've forgotten that

particular conversation

I don't have many examples of horses drawn by Gray, and I don't remember referring to those few examples during the creation of *Louis Riel*. What I did refer to was Jack Hamm's *How to Draw Animals*.

As I recall the conversation, what few Harold Gray horses you had weren't running horses—or, at least, not galloping *horses which you needed for the scenes of the Métis pursuing the Canadian soldiers and for Gabriel Dumont's reckless charge. I found it interesting because I was having to solve the same problem with the Three Wise Fellows after the massacre of the Cirinists. What horse illustration reference I had was of posed horses or horses cantering. What I did was to get a couple of picture books on the Kentucky Derby and thoroughbred horse racing out of the library. Even there, the number of photos of horses galloping flat out were few and far between since a horse race is a more formal set up. Part of the horse's training involves staying in a narrow "flight path" which (I assume) would differ from the training of a horse for military purposes.*

It had to do with the legs, you decided



172·6

173·1

Now I know what you're talking about. I decided to usually draw running horses with their legs splayed out front and back (the "flying" position). This isn't how horses really run. I had good reference material showing how horses run (pages 64 to 67 of Hamm's book) but the splayed-out legs were easier to draw and somehow looked "right". Probably one of the reasons that they looked "right" was because I was looking at a lot of 19th century drawings and paintings to try to get a feel for the time, and the artists who created those images usually depicted horses running with splayed-out legs because no one knew how horses actually ran until the publication of Eadweard Muybridge's photographs of running horses in the late 19th century.

I had a bit of a problem on page 160 where I have Dumont's horse running for four panels. I wanted to show the horse's legs moving in some manner and was reluctant to retreat to realism. Flipping through Hamm's book, I noticed his pictures of an impala running on page 19—that looked "right" to me, so that's what I based the running horse on page 160 on. I had the same problem in panels 172.6 to 173:2. There I drew the horse with splayed-out legs in 172:6 and 173:2 and with the legs in a realistic running position (for a horse—not an impala) in panel 173:1. I think that was the better solution to the problem than using the impala reference.

You should have called me up when you were drawing that scene with the Three Wise Fellows on horses—I'd have faxed you the relevant pages from the Hamm book. (Based on what I was doing in *Riel*, you must have just assumed that I didn't have good reference.)

You're right. I should have

On page 203 when the court clerk reads the charges against Riel to the court and says, "Louis Riel, being moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil..." I assume you got this from the trial transcripts. Of course, given that I see Riel as having been manipulated by YHWH, this rings pretty true to me. I was wondering if this was a standard preamble in Canadian jurisprudence of the time—or if someone got a little ker-whomp they weren't expecting.

My guess would be that it was a standard preamble—at least for serious crimes like treason.

On page 212-213, when Riel objects to Francois-Xavier Lemieux—his own lawyer's—approach to questioning Nolin, it's an interesting moment, particularly when the judge asks Riel, "Are you defended by counsel?" This reminded me a great deal of that incredible moment in From Hell *when Dr. Gull is facing his own inquisitor who asks, "Dr. Gull? Are you fit to continue?" As*

I said in my dialogue with Alan, the question functions on a number of different levels, from the banal to the exalted and—in the fictional case of Dr. Gull and the real-world case of Riel, they each appear to be immobilized by both the depths and the heights which the question represents for them. In Riel's case, I suspect, at the highest spiritual levels, this is a real "day of reckoning" for him, given that, under Riel's jurisdiction, Scott had been condemned to death with only the barest inkling of the proceedings against him—and wholly reliant on Riel himself for that barest inkling. In a spiritual sense, I suspect, deeper parts of Riel than he was aware of were recalled to that earlier event by the question posed. It seems to me that, in answering, he (or whatever spirit or Spirit is inhabiting him) answers both as Riel and as Scott—that, in making his own case, he makes Scott's case as well and in defending his present self, he indicts his earlier self. It is only when the judge rephrases the question that Riel can even begin to answer:

Is your case in the hands of counsel?

Partly—my cause is partly in his hands.

(This, it seems to me, is Riel discussing his own lawyer and Riel play-acting Scott discussing Riel)

(The judge returns to the original question)

Are you defended by counsel or not?

(It's a ball-breaker of a question, all right. Was Scott defended by counsel? There is an inherent disparity between being defended by counsel and being effectively *defended by counsel)*

I want his services, but I want my cause to be defended to the best which circumstances allow.

(This, it seems to me, is he/she/it evasiveness of a very high order. Scott had the best defense "circumstances would allow" insofar as Riel was the only person fluent in English in the community where Scott was tried...or, rather, "tried". Riel is, spiritually, attempting to defend his earlier self as Scott's counsel while trying to open the question of whether someone else might be appointed for him—the circumstances here, he is saying, allow for more options as to who might represent him. Unfortunately, this can also be taken at face value: the circumstances, as they stand, are that he is represented by counsel to a far greater extent than Scott was. He is not effectively represented, but he is represented. Therefore the circumstances allow that situation to continue.)

Then you must leave it in his hands.

(It would be hard to imagine a persuasive argument that could be made against this in light of Riel's treatment of Scott. Riel—or the spirit who is informing him—attempts to tackle the question obliquely:)

My counsel comes from Quebec—from a far province. (It's a good beginning: it holds true both for Riel and for Riel's present lawyer). He has to put questions to men with whom he is not acquainted on circumstances which he does not know. (Here Riel, or the spirit appears to be drawing a distinction between his own situation at Scott's trial—where he was questioning men he knew about circumstances in which he himself had been a relevant figure—and his situation at this trial where his lawyer does not know the men he is questioning or Nolin's or the Red River community's entire "back-story". It's an interesting point, but quasi-legal at best. The law obviously can't demand that a lawyer has to know every witness intimately and to be a central figure in their lives in order to be deemed to be representing a given client effectively. Riel and/or the spirit continues:)

Although I am willing to give him all the information that I can, he cannot follow the thread of all the questions that could be put to the witnesses.

(Riel, it seems to me, stumbles badly here with the phrase "he cannot follow the thread of all the questions"—Riel isn't eloquently bilingual, but he is able to "follow the thread of all the questions" which Scott had not been. Scott not only couldn't follow the thread, he couldn't understand a word of the proceedings against him).

He loses more than three quarters of the good opportunities of making good answers.

(By this point, to me, Riel is now taking the equivalent of boxing's "standing eight count". "Making good answers" is a very skewed way of describing—particularly to a judge's face—the nature of trial testimony. The assumption, in any civilized judicial system, of what counsel is attempting to achieve in the course of a trial is to bring out all the truths relevant to the issue at hand—and the judge's primary role relative to counsel is, in the trial context, to exclude demonstrable falsehoods and irrelevancies. To describe a counsel's questions as inadequate

because they're not "making good.." that is to say, advantageous-to-the-defendent "...answers" is an affront to the court and particularly to the judge. An impartial judge wouldn't allow *counsel to "make good answers" through his questions—that would be "leading the witness". Trial questions, properly and fairly stated, should elicit only a "yes" or a "no" reply.*

It also—unfortunately for Riel and whatever spirit is informing his assertions—introduces the larger indictment: at Scott's trial how many "good opportunities of 'making good answers'" did Riel forego on Scott's behalf given Riel's greater familiarity with the witnesses and events? Presumably quite a few considering that Scott was condemned to be executed for an unpremeditated crime of passion in what was, arguably, a wartime context.

Riel's lawyer offers to resign: the only legal way that Riel can manage his own defence. Riel gets evasive again:)

I was going to ask if it is in any way possible that I should put a question to the witness and my good lawyer being there to give me advice necessary to stop me when I go out of procedure.

That is a matter between you and counsel, *says the judge.*

I will not accept that arrangement, says Riel's lawyer.

(Badda-bing, badda-boom, Checkmate. Riel would not have accepted the arrangement with Scott although it would have a gone a long way towards making Scott's trial at least a semblance of a just proceeding and not a Stalinist show trial.)

I 'AVE ACTED IN SELF-DEFENCE, WHILE TE GOVERNMENT, BEING IRRESPONSIBLE AND INSANE, CANNOT BUT 'AVE ACTED WRONG, AND IF TREASON T'ERE IS, IT MUST BE ON ITS' SIDE AND NOT ON MY PART.

Have I to keep silent? Riel asks.

Suppose this gentleman does not continue your defence—you might have counsel assigned by the court, and then you would be bound.

(Just so: as Riel was assigned as Scott's counsel and as Scott was thereby bound by the limits of the defence Riel was prepared to mount on his behalf—which was basically no defence at all. There's no way out. When Riel "defended" Scott inadequately and allowed him to be executed under his, Riel's, universally acknowledged jurisdiction, Riel effectively boxed himself in at his own trial two years in the future. It could only end one way: the way Scott's trial did).

It is not against his dignity. I cannot see it in that light.

(Fascinating. In one sense, Scott, speaking through Riel, gets the last word. Riel would not have shared Scott's defence with Scott because it would have lowered Riel—offended against his dignity—in Riel's eyes to do so. Riel is accusing his lawyer of Riel's own analogous "pridefulness") (In another sense, it could also be seen as Riel's reaction to the spirit within him trying to explain to Riel that, by implying that the judge would, without objection, allow counsel to "make good answers" Riel had insulted the judge's—and the court's—dignity and, therefore, has brought his guilty verdict upon himself:)

It is not against his dignity. I cannot see it in that light.

It's Riel's last word in his own defence before he is sentenced to be hanged.

That's not Riel's last word before being hanged—not even in my version of the story. You're forgetting the speech he gives to the jury on pages 228 and 229. A speech that I drastically shortened. The whole speech as recorded in *The Queen v. Louis Riel* takes up 14 pages of type.

Yes, his extraordinary assertion that it was the Crown *which had committed the act of treason against* him. *Humpty Dumpty-like, he believes that words mean what he wants them to mean rather than having indissoluble meaning on their own. I'll have to read the whole thing someday to see if he ever gets any more lucid than that.*

Anyway, that was a fascinating analysis and a good reminder for me of why I enjoy reading your words (and listening to you talk). You come at everything with such idiosyncratic originality. It probably doesn't need to be pointed out that when shaping the scene (I can't claim to have written it), I was concerned about what was going on at a much more obvious and mundane psychological level.

In your "Q & A" in the Books section of the National Post, *you said that your next project is going to be an autobiographical graphic novel about your sex life. Speaking as a taxpayer, I hope you won't be writing off too many visits to your "girlfriends" as research. How's it coming along?*

I haven't begun work on it yet. I've been too

busy doing promotional stuff for the Riel book and illustration work to get any "real" work done.

Ha-ha—don't worry—I haven't been writing off my whoring and don't plan to.

Any decision on what parameters you intend to set? Does it start post-Sook Yin in your prostitution phase? Or are you going back to your girlfriend periods as well?

The latter—that's the plan at this point, but that plan might change as I start to work on the script.

I have to say that I admire the fact that you bounced back from your experience with Underwater, *saying that* Louis Riel *would consist of approximately ten comic books and, by God, ten comic books it was. Are you going to set similar parameters with the new work or leave it open? Any working title? Or are you just superstitious enough not to want to say anything about it until you get rolling?*

I don't know how long it'll be, though I doubt I'd want it to be longer than *Louis Riel*. No working title yet. It probably won't be serialized—it'll just appear as a "graphic novel". (I'm still not comfortable with that term.) And it might not appear at all. If I start writing it and decide it's not working, I'll set it aside and work on something else.

Well. It's been an interesting couple of months conducting this dialogue. There is a psychiatric term, "referential thinking" which identifies as a mental illness the subjective notion that completely unrelated events in the world are somehow related to one's self (Starson's notion that he controls the Pope would be an example of "referential thinking"). Since neither of us are faithful Congregationalists in the scientific materialist "Church" or "church," I'll just note that it interested me that

i) a day or so after I wrote the bit about how I think jurisprudence could only be improved by keeping all emotion-based constructs a country mile away from it—that the only pertinent elements in Scott's "trial" should have been a) what did Scott do? b) what are the relevant laws? and c) what is an appropriate punishment?—that the Saudis finally let Canadian William Sampson go after keeping him imprisoned, under torture and under threat of a death sentence for well over two years

ii) that the October 2 Ontario Provincial election took place pretty much at the mid-point of our discussion, bringing the he/she/it Liberals to power in a precise he/she/it 3:1 ratio over the ousted Conservatives (72 seats to 24)

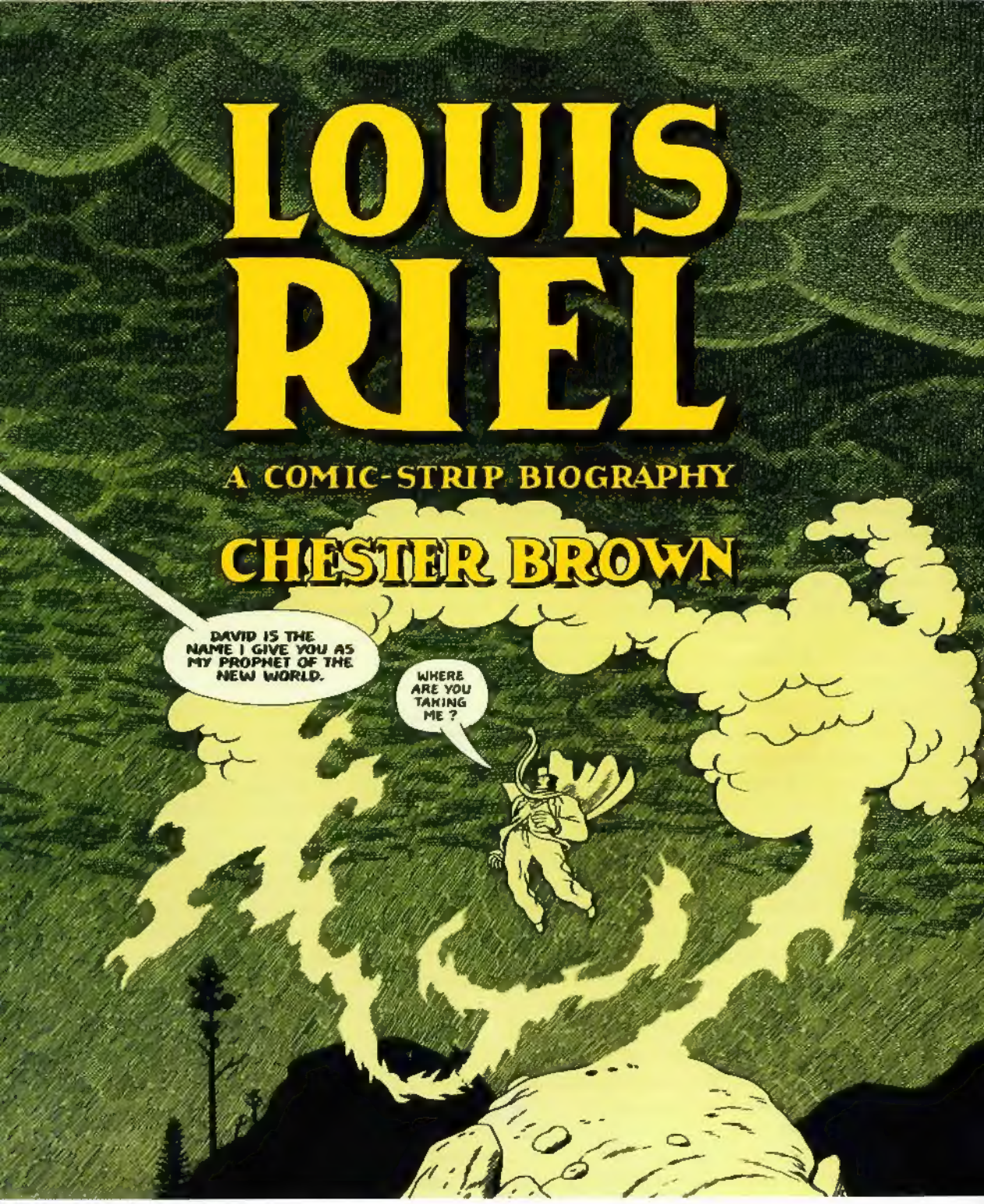
iii) that even as I was hectoring you about your feminist evasiveness and foot-dragging, it turns out that something comparable was taking place between Canada's two federal conservative parties, the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives, wherein the leader of the former party, Stephen Harper (according to the 16 October issue of the National Post) *"...flew to Toronto and insisted on a meeting with Mr. McKay" (of the latter party) (and) "...after public sniping, back-room griping and a Keystone Kops-like chase that saw Mr. Harper hound Mr. McKay all the way to Toronto in a bid to force a meeting between the two men" and after a summer of evasiveness and foot-dragging on the part of the Progressive Conservatives' new leader we now have the altogether happy result that the two parties are on the verge of reuniting (against all odds) in time for the next federal election with the (to me, significant) loss of the adjective "Progressive" from the newly revivified Conservative Party of Canada.*

As with so many recent events in which I see the finger of God, a largely inexplicable but welcome development here in our virtual one-party Marxist state. And perhaps it represents the first large step back from our country's century-long subjugation to (what is to me) the entirely misapprehended "martyrdom" of Louis Riel—whose execution by the Canadian government was entirely appropriate given his own actions, arrived at through his own free-will choices and enacted, without any trace of mercy or compassion, against two individuals in situations directly analogous to his own.

This time, you really do get the absolute last word, Chet.

I'm perfectly willing to believe that there are connections of some sort between seemingly unrelated events at a mystical or spiritual level, but I'm wondering if I'm a bit dim-witted right now, because I'm not seeing the connections between our dialogue and the news events you mention. Perhaps I would if I followed the news more closely.

Thanks for taking the time to do this dialogue when you could ill spare that time. Now get back to drawing! I've been a *Cerebus* fan since 1980, and I'm eager to see how the story ends.


LOUIS RIEL
A COMIC-STRIP BIOGRAPHY
CHESTER BROWN
DAVID IS THE NAME I GIVE YOU AS MY PROPHET OF THE NEW WORLD.
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME ?

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